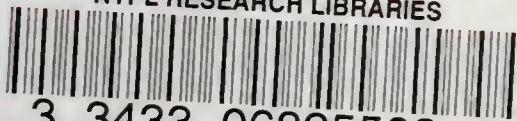


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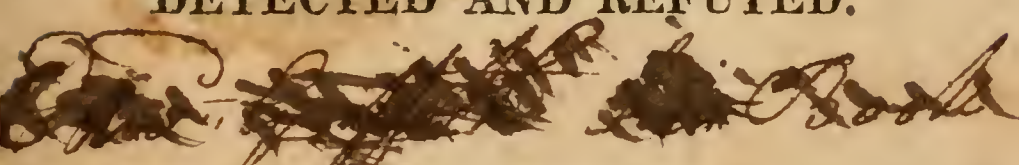






THE
ERRORS
OF
HOPKINSIANISM

DETECTED AND REFUTED.



SIX LETTERS

TO THE REV. S. WILLISTON,

PASTOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN DURHAM, N. Y.

•••••

BY NATHAN BANGS,

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL,

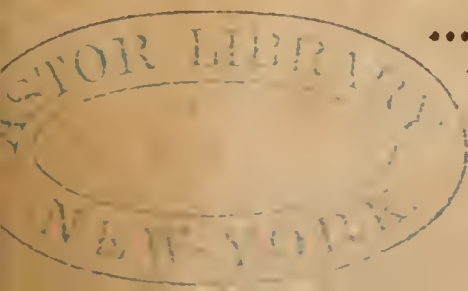
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Buy the Truth and sell it not.—PROV. XXIII. 23.

NEW-YORK :

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR, BY JOHN C. TOTTEN,
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•••••
1815.



District of New-York, to wit:

{ L. S. } **B**E IT REMEMBERED, that on the sixth day of October, in the fortieth year of the Independence of the United States of America, NATHAN BANGS, of the said district, hath deposited in this office, the title of a book, the right whereof he claims as author, in the words following, to wit:

“The Errors of Hopkinsianism detected and refuted, in Six Letters to the Rev. S. Williston, Pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Durham, N. Y. By Nathan Bangs, Minister of the Gospel. Buy the truth and sell it not. Prov. xxiii. 23.”

In conformity to the act of the Congress of the United States, entitled “an Act for the encouragement of Learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the Authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned,” and also to an act, entitled “An act supplementary to an Act, entitled an Act for the encouragement of Learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts and Books to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned, and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of Designing Engraving, and Etching, Historical and other prints.”

THERON RUDD,

Clerk of the Southern District of New-York.

TO THE
MINISTERS AND PREACHERS,

COMPOSING THE

New-York Annual Conference,

THE following work is respectfully and affectionately inscribed, as a tribute of gratitude for the invaluable privileges the Author has enjoyed, and still enjoys, as a member of your body ; and as a testimony of his cordial union with you, in striving to promote the glorious cause of Christianity.

THE AUTHOR.

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V. 1000

PREFACE.

THE following letters are entitled, "The Errors of Hopkinsianism detected and refuted," not because Mr. Williston has adopted *every* part of that system, nor because *all* its errors are here exposed: but because he apparently agrees with the Hopkinsian system in some of its most prominent features, and because those features especially are noticed. In regard to original sin, if I understand their meaning, he evidently differs from the Hopkinsians; for Dr. *Emmons*, who was a celebrated Hopkinsian writer, says, "Adam conveyed neither sin, nor guilt, nor moral depravity to his descendants, by his first transgression."* But Mr. W. supposes total depravity to consist in the sinfulness of our natures,

* This quotation and others which I have made from Hopkinsian writers, are borrowed from a work called, "Contrast between Calvinism and Hopkinsianism." See page 71. I take it for granted, that the author has given a faithful representation of their sentiments, as he has made copious extracts, professedly in their own words. The *few* passages I have transcribed, are as I find them in his book, not having, at present, access to the originals.

which we bring into the world with us, see. p. 30, 31, of his book. On the doctrine of Foreordination, Eternal decrees, Election and Reprobation, God's being the efficient cause of sin, Sin being for the greatest good of the universe, the Universality of the atonement, Disinterested Benevolence, Regeneration, and free-agency, there appears a perfect coincidence of sentiment between them.

In regard to the public debate which gave rise to the sermons, which are examined in these letters, perhaps it would be uninteresting and useless, to detail the particulars of it here. The subjects handled in the five first letters were the points of debate at that time. Thus much I may be allowed to say, that I did not engage in the controversy, because it is my delight to dispute. I was led to it from a sense of duty—and from the same motive I have written.

Respecting the subjects of this investigation, I consider them some of the most important doctrines of the Gospel; and therefore it is not a matter of indifference which system is embraced. Any system which eclipses the glory of the Divine attributes, and exculpates man from blame in his wicked conduct, must be unfriendly to the interests of religion. If man be not *free*, he is not responsible, not a subject of moral government, neither rewardable nor punishable, upon the principles of justice and goodness. Indeed all laws, human and divine, presuppose an ability in man to obey them. Why

does the judge pronounce sentence of condemnation upon a criminal? Is it not on the supposition that he might have done otherwise? Whatever mysteries therefore, there may be in the science of human nature, and however difficult it may be to obviate the objections which may be urged from *prescience*, there is no fact more certain than this, that man is a free-agent, as it respects his moral conduct.—Those gentlemen who urge the doctrine of total depravity against this truth, seem to forget one very important trait in the Gospel system, viz. the atonement of Christ, and the benefits which universally flow from it to mankind, by which they are graciously restored to the power of action.

To be an idle, indifferent spectator, therefore, while doctrines are propagated with avidity, which destroy this characteristic of man, and nullify so important a trait of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, cannot be justly considered a Christian virtue. It is not, it is true, congenial to the feelings of my mind, to enter the list of controversy, while conscious many things must be said offensive to some who are justly esteemed on many accounts. The all-important truths of God, however, are of vastly more importance than the feelings of any number of individuals, and they must be *defended*, although the others should be *offended*. However the piety and friendship of those persons who embrace the doctrines herein opposed, may be valued, the sacred truths of the Gospel are not to be tamely

sacrificed for the sake of purchasing their friendship. No candid Christian can require this.

I may have mistaken the meaning of scripture, but I cannot mistake the sincerity of my intentions, and the purity of my motives. And whatever aversion I might have to controversies of this description, I believe myself called in the present instance, to take up my cross and follow Christ.—Indeed it has been crossing to my leading inclination to consent to write and publish these letters. In doing it, however, I have satisfied my conscience, and hope to render some small service to the cause of truth and piety—and I sincerely pray, that the truth will not have suffered for having passed through my hands, and that the spirit of charity and *brotherly love* will not be diminished by these strictures.

The reader must judge for himself respecting the sentiments and arguments in the following sheets, and make up his mind accordingly.

In regard to those passages of scripture which speak on the subject of *election*, the plain state of the case appears to be this,—From the circumstance of God's choosing Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and his posterity, to whom was committed the lively oracles of truth, and through whom Jesus Christ was to come according to the flesh, they were denominated the *elect*, or chosen people of God.—The peculiar care which God manifested towards that people, in the various privileges granted them,

the protection and deliverance extended to them, caused them to conclude that all other nations were *reprobated*, and that all *their* nation were *elected*.—This erroneous sentiment our Lord combated in the sharp controversy he held with their learned Doctors and Scribes. When the Apostles were sent out to preach the glad tidings of salvation to Jews and Gentiles, who, in consequence of believing the report, were collected into the Church, and enjoyed its distinguished privileges, they adopted the same phraseology, denominating all the members of the visible church the *elect*, the chosen people of God—And when speaking of the Gospel method of salvation, which was invariably the same to Jews and Gentiles, they sometimes called it God's predestination, appointment or determination.* This predestination, or predetermination of God respects the means of salvation, the foundation of pardon and acceptance, which is Christ Jesus, and the qualification for heaven. These are immutably the same, and can never vary to suit the whim and caprice of mutable man—man must bend to them, or otherwise he must suffer the fearful consequence.

God is enthroned in uncreated wisdom and goodness, by which he was led to establish the most wise and benevolent method to rescue man from the thralldom of sin. Having fixed the terms on which sinners must be saved, if saved, his gracious determination is, never to recede from them. Thus he

* See the Appendix.

hath appointed all obedient believers to everlasting life, and all disobedient unbelievers to eternal death. Here we may behold the beneficent predestination of God; and also see the reason why those terms are used to designate the people of God. Personal and individual election and reprobation appear to have been strangers upon earth in the Apostles' days. By an abuse of their phraseology these doctrines have sprung up in the Christian Church, by which the minds of the simple are led astray, being continually tormented with doubts and fears, which are engendered from erroneous conceptions of the divine character.

In the following sheets, I have attempted to explain some of those difficult passages, which have been supposed to favour the doctrine of eternal and individual election, and other sentiments intimately connected with it; and to answer some of the arguments which have been used to establish those points. How far I have succeeded, is not for me to determine. I must beg the reader's indulgence for any errors he may discover; and also intreat an interest in his prayers, that I may experience that deliverance from sin, and that perfection of love, which qualifies the soul for eternal happiness.

To hold the truth in unrighteousness, would only expose us to greater *shame and contempt*. While, therefore, we strive after accurate ideas of God,

and of his truth, let us seek a conformity to his will and image in all things. Speculative knowledge alone only puffeth up the soul with self-conceit; while *charity, love*, edifieth. O that both writer and reader may so improve the day of our merciful visitation, that we may at last inherit eternal life.

N. B.



ERRORS OF HOPKINSIANISM.

LETTER I.

ON FOREORDINATION.

Rev. Sir,

NOT long since I had an opportunity of reading your sermons which were occasioned by the public debate between Mr. Benedict and myself, in Durham, May 2d, 1810. After an attentive perusal of them, I hesitated whether I ought to take any public notice of them or not. This hesitation, however, did not arise from any conviction of their truth, nor from any supposed difficulty in refuting the erroneous sentiments you have attempted to establish; but partly from an aversion to controversies of this nature, and partly from an apprehension that the manifest contradictions, the glaring absurdities, and the many misapplications of scripture, were sufficient to carry their own confutation. But when it is considered that the subtilty of error insinuates itself often imperceptibly into the human mind, by which the judgment is perverted, and a wrong bias given to the whole train of thinking, unless timely checked in its progress by the barrier of

truth—and also that I am more immediately concerned than any one else, in consequence of having taken an active part in the debate alluded to, I think myself bound to enter a public protest against what are deemed the dangerous errors advanced in your sermons.

Another consideration likewise induces me to take my pen on this occasion, namely, that you have not given a fair and candid statement of the points debated, nor of the arguments used. This I hope to convince you of in the course of these letters. Let these considerations, dear sir, be my apology for troubling you with these remarks ; and also for continuing a controversy which is already worn thread bare, by the repeated publications on these subjects. The propositions you have stated, and the arguments used to support them, have, the most of them, been answered over and over again, by men of the first qualifications, both as it respects erudition and piety ; and their arguments remain unanswered and unanswerable to the present day. It is hardly possible therefore to advance any thing new upon subjects which have been so ably investigated.* It is possible, however, for these remarks

* Considering, however, that Hopkinsianism is of comparatively recent date, and that in several instances it differs from Calvinism, on these accounts the controversy, as far as we are concerned in it, assumes in some respects, a different aspect. Formerly we had to contend for the moral agency of man, the universality of the atonement, and justification by faith.—Truth has at length prevailed, and those points are yielded by many, although so explained as to do away their practical influence.

to fall into the hands of some, who have not seen the invaluable authors alluded to; and under God, may be a mean, either of reclaiming them from a pernicious error, or of confirming them in the truth.

Without further introduction, I begin with some remarks upon the text which you have made the foundation of your sermon on foreordination. That God *worketh all things after the counsel of his own will*, is not disputed; but that the doctrine you have attempted to deduce from these words, was never designed by the Apostle, is easily demonstrated. You say, “The first is, that God brings to pass every thing which is brought to pass;” whereas the text says nothing about “bringing every thing to pass which is brought to pass.” It simply states, that *he worketh all things after the counsel of his own will*. The question to be determined is, *What is the counsel of his will?* You say that it means, that “God foreordained every event which comes to pass,” p. 1. If every event which comes to pass, is brought to pass by God’s plan, as you call it, or is an effect of his decree, then there can be no event, however trivial in itself, however wicked, foolish, and inconsistent, but what is included in this plan which you ascribe to God, and which, according to your statement, is the effect of his uncontrollable decree. If this system does not ascribe wickedness, foolishness, and absurdity to God, there are no such things as wickedness, foolishness, and absurdity in the world; for all events, whether they be wicked or good, foolish or wise, absurd or con-

sistent, you intimate are included in God's plan, p. 6. Are not foolishness, wickedness, and all inconsistencies, events? If not, what are they? causes, means, or ends? It matters not by what name they are distinguished, whether causes, means, ends or events; for according to your system, they are all included in the divine plan; and you assert, p. 1, "God brings to pass every thing which is brought to pass;" and therefore whatever name is attached to what comes to pass, whether cause or effect, wisdom or folly, they are all, according to your sentiment, the work of God. Now, sir, you must either deny that there are such things as folly, wickedness, and absurdity, or ascribe them to God. If you undertake to do the first, you must blot out of the Bible all those passages of scripture which speak of those things, (and you know they are very many) and shew the inspired writers were mistaken. If you ascribe them to God still, as you have already done in your book, I ask who imputes "folly" to him now? p. 3. It will not help you any to say, that these wicked and foolish actions, are said to be the actions of men. This we know; and in this respect we follow the inspired writers, in imputing them to wicked and foolish men. But according to your doctrine, they are no more the actions of men, than the moving of my pen are *its* actions; and in this case it would be as absurd to find fault with my pen for bad writing, as to find fault with men for their inconsistent conduct. For you say, All events are brought about by God's

plan; and expressly assert in the first page of your book, that they are his work.

Permit me here to repeat the text and your comment. *Who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.* “There are two ideas,” say you, “contained in this passage.” The first is, That God brings to pass every thing which is brought to pass. The other is, That he brings all things to pass, according to a *plan*, or scheme devised by his own mind.” Do folly and sin come to pass? most certainly. Who brings them to pass? “God brings to pass, every thing which comes to pass.” Is sin and folly produced by wisdom and holiness? You say yes, by admitting God to be wise and holy. Do these effects answer to their cause? No; for nothing is more opposite than wisdom and holiness to folly and sin; and yet according to your sentiments, sin and folly have resulted from infinite wisdom and holiness. I ask again, who imputes “consummate folly” to God now?

Any hypothesis which imputes wickedness and folly to a being of infinite wisdom and holiness, must be false; but your doctrine of foreordination does this; and therefore it is false. If any should doubt respecting your ascribing sin to God, let them examine the note, p. 23. Here you state expressly, that God is the *efficient cause* of sin; and lest your readers should not believe you meant to make God the cause of sin, you have made the words *efficient cause*, emphatical, by causing them to be printed in italics.

Having made these general remarks upon your explanation of the text, I proceed to consider the subject more methodically. In doing this, permit me, in some measure, to imitate the method you have adopted. From the perfection of God's character it is impossible for him to foreordain whatsoever comes to pass. However difficult in many instances, it may be to prove a negative, I think it not impossible in the present case. It will be admitted by all, that God is infinitely *just, wise, holy, good, and true*—and any system which, either in its principle, or by consequence, militates against these perfections of Deity, must be erroneous. That the system which you have advanced, and advocated does this, the following observations are designed to shew.

I. 1. It militates against the justice of God, according to your own assertion in page 67, where you say, "Impartiality requires that all innocent persons should be justified." Impartial conduct is an exemplification of justice. Now if God from all eternity foreordained whatsoever comes to pass, he ordained the condemnation of part of the angels, of Adam and all his posterity while in a state of perfect innocence. It is of no use to say they became sinners before the sentence of condemnation went forth against them; for agreeably to your system their sin was only an intermediate link in the immense chain of irresistible decrees, which was necessary to bring about the end which God had in view. If therefore justice or impartiality required all inno-

cent persons should be justified, it is an impeachment of that resplendent attribute of Deity, to say that he foreordained their condemnation while in a state of perfect innocence. And in regard to their sin, agreeably to your doctrine, they acted perfectly according to the divine mind, unless you suppose his decrees were contrary to his will; and if so, they could not have done otherwise, unless you suppose they could have *resisted* the irresistible decrees of God, which is a contradiction.

See that stern judge upon the bench, and that trembling criminal at the bar—The witnesses are pointed in their testimony against him—murder, wilful murder is proved—His counsel, or rather a professed advocate for the judge, proceeds to develop the circumstances of the case—“The criminal says he, is guilty of wilful murder, and therefore the sentence of condemnation must be pronounced against him. True, he is dependent on the honourable court for his present existence; for such unlimited authority hath his honour over the lives of men, especially such as are devoted to such flagrant acts of wickedness, that he may take them away at pleasure—But be it known to you, gentlemen of the jury, that this same honourable judge contrived ‘a plan’ by which this wicked murderer should be excited to sin as he has; and lest his ‘plan or scheme’ should not take effect he secretly provoked him to anger against his brother, and even guided his hand when the fatal blow was given.” But pray Mr. counsel, says the foreman of the jury, do you mean

to impeach the character of our honourable judge? I have always thought differently of him—I took him for an upright man—“and so indeed he is,” rejoins the wise counsel—“Permit me to explain the reasons of his conduct. You must know then, that there are some men “ministers of satan,” who pretend to plead the cause of righteousness, who are continually harping upon the evil of sin, its unhappy influence upon society; and they also insinuate, that my manner of vindicating the judge has a tendency to asperse his character, especially his goodness and justice—I hope you have not heard their harangues—But as I was about to say, our honourable judge is of a quite different opinion respecting sin—He thinks the rest of our honest neighbours could not be happy were there not some murderers and thieves, &c. that he might have an opportunity of displaying his *sovereignty* in punishing them.—To convince you and all other good people that he is right, he contrived, as I said before, that this man, who stands trembling before you, should commit this sin, that he might make a public example of him before you all. Some, indeed, have intimated that he is not *just* in punishing men for doing what he designed they should; but this only proceeds from ignorance; and he wishes to let them know how mistaken they are. It is true “his holy nature abhors” murder, although he has determined many shall commit it, even against his commands—For you must also know that he has expressly forbidden it—but his determination, which must stand,

because perfectly according to his good pleasure, is secretly opposed to his commands, and it must and shall be accomplished. Therefore, gentlemen, please to pronounce sentence, that our judge may have an opportunity of convincing you of the justice and impartiality of his determinations."

Do you think, sir, the judge would approbate such a speech? and yet in such a point of light you represent the *Judge of all the earth*, for you expressly assert that all things, and consequently wickedness of every kind, is brought about by the agency of God, and that they are according to the counsel of his will, and yet that he will adjudge to everlasting torments those who thus fulfil his will. If such sentiments do not cast an impenetrable mist around the glory of God's justice, I know not what can.

2. But this doctrine not only eclipses the glory of God's justice in the condemnation of the wicked, it also militates, in the second place, against the *wisdom* of God. For according to the representation you have given of his character, he is so deficient in wisdom that he cannot govern the world without a previous plan. Here you reduce the infinitely wise God to the level of an ignorant mechanic, who cannot see the end from the beginning without a prescribed plan. I conclude his own infinite mind is sufficient to guide him in all his multifarious works and ways, without any previously devised "plan or scheme." The goodness, wisdom, and immutability of his counsel, as well as his infinite

foresight of all possible causes and events, preclude the necessity of any other limits to regulate his adorable conduct.

Your doctrine also militates against the *wisdom* of God by making the decrees, and commands clash—you very justly conclude that the harmony of God's works are marks or evidences of his wisdom. But in p. 7. you insinuate that his decrees and commands are in opposition to each other. He *decreed* that man should murder, and that the children of Israel should make *their children pass through the fire to Moloch*, which thing he commanded them not. Here then are two *works* of the Almighty, his *decrees* and *commands* directly opposed to each other. Is this harmony? Such conduct is so far from being a mark of wisdom, that it is indicative of the most consummate duplicity and folly. It is an evidence of duplicity, because it supposes him to command mankind to do that, which he never designed they should—and it is an indication of folly to publish laws, which were superceded by a prior act of the Almighty, called a decree. As God is infinitely sincere, and wise, he cannot be the author of that doctrine which necessarily imputes insincerity and folly to him; and as the jarring sentiments which you advocate fix these reproachful blots on his character, they must, on that very account, if no other reasons could be assigned, be erroneous.

Another reason why your inconsistent doctrine sullies the glory of infinite wisdom is, that it supposes it impossible for God to foresee what *will be*,

unless he predetermine it *shall be*. The doctrine espoused by us, acknowledges, not only that his infinite prescience seeth what *will be*, but also all that may, and *might have been*. And this prescience does not depend upon a predetermination of the Almighty for its existence, nor upon the transpiring events brought about by the voluntary conduct of free agents, but is an essential perfection of his nature. To say that his prescience depends upon his predetermination, is to suppose a time when the Almighty did not possess infinite knowledge. In this way you make knowledge, or wisdom respecting future events, an adventitious property of the divine mind, and therefore not essential: and if not essential he may exist without it—It is easy to perceive, therefore, that your doctrine in this way also, eclipses the glory of infinite wisdom. It were easy, without any such perfection as infinite knowledge, to predict future events, if these events depended solely on a predetermination in the Almighty to bring them to pass: but God possesses this perfection in the most pre-eminent degree; *for known unto him are all his works from the foundation of the world*: and inasmuch as your doctrine of foreordination annihilates his prescience, it must be unscriptural and irrational.

Once more—the doctrine of immutable decrees respecting every event sullies the glory of God's wisdom, by supposing him incapable of governing mankind as free agents. If all our actions are the result of a predetermining cause in God, as you as-

sert, we have no more freedom than the water which descends from the clouds. To adopt your sentiment therefore, and then talk about freedom and responsibility in man, is perfect nonsense. On this absurd principle his freedom is purely mechanical, for he can no more move in opposition to irresistible decrees, than he can reverse the eternal laws of order, unless you suppose him capable of breaking God's decrees; and in this case certainly the "eternal purpose," would not take effect. So that according to your principle all his thoughts, words, and actions are as immutably fixed, as the throne of God itself. How then in the name of reason, can you assert, that man is a free agent, and accountable for his conduct? Do you think merely because he feels no compulsion, he is therefore free? The water, the air, nor the fire feel any compulsive force, although governed by immutable laws—are they therefore free-agents, and responsible for their conduct? O sir, can you lay your hand upon your breast, and in the fear of God say, that the ideas you have advanced respecting man's responsibility, and the reasons for it, carry conviction to your own judgment? Pardon this appeal, sir,—it is hard to suspect a man's sincerity. But I sincerely confess, I can see not the smallest shade of difference, upon your scheme, between the reasons which are offered for man's accountability, and what might be given for inert matter.

Neither will it be of any avail to say that his actions result from his depraved nature. He is no

more accountable for this, on your principle, than the water is for its solidity, or the air for its transparency. For even this fallen, depraved nature, according to your scheme, was brought upon mankind by *Adam*, and upon him, by an almighty decree, made antecedent to his existence, which he could no more resist, or control, than he could dethrone the Almighty himself. And to make mankind accountable for that in which they had no concern, is as unreasonable, as to make your child of two years old accountable for the errors of your sermons. In fact, from the fairest principles of reason, inferable from your first principle advanced in the first page of your book, God is the immediate author not only of all the good, but also of all the evil ever committed by men or devils. And if this is not scandalizing the immaculate character of God in the most emphatical sense of the word, I know not what ought, in justice, to be so called.

Now if the Almighty cannot govern man as a free agent, it is because he lacks wisdom. But according to your scheme he either cannot or will not. For the doctrine of foreordination, and universal and irresistible decrees, is totally subversive of free agency. It is certainly a greater manifestation of wisdom to adapt a government to the circumstances and capacities of a world of free, responsible agents, than it is to compel them in all their actions, by an irresistible influence. Seeing therefore that God is infinitely wise, and that the doctrine advanced by you, sir, is subversive of that adorable perfection, it

must of consequence be false ; and a false doctrine cannot originate from God.

3. In the third place, your doctrine militates against the *holiness* of God. If the Almighty be holy, as you must admit, nothing unholy can proceed from him. But there are many unholy events which take place. Do these unholy, sinful events originate from God ? I suppose you will answer, No. But what says your doctrine ? “ God includes in his plan every thing which comes to pass.” Does not sin come to pass ? and who brings it to pass ? “ The first is, That God brings to pass every thing which is brought to pass.” God brings every thing to pass—*sin* comes to pass ; therefore God brings sin to pass.

How will you avoid this conclusion ? You cannot in any way fairly, but by denying your principle.—An unholy *effect* must have an unholy *cause* ; but sin, the *effect*, is unholy, and therefore must proceed from an unholy cause. Now according to your doctrine *sin* originates from God, as its “ efficient cause ;” and from this it follows by fair consequence that God is unholy. Such are the fatal consequences of your doctrine—it strikes at the holiness of God. But God is infinitely holy, and therefore that “ scheme” which annihilates this essential property of the divine nature, cannot be true.

4. The *goodness* of God shines among his adorable perfections like the moon amidst the stars of heaven ; and whatever has a tendency to tarnish its glories must be rejected. But your doctrine of

universal decrees, casts an impenetrable shade around it, until it is dispelled by the wafting rays of truth. While speaking of the precious elect, it is true, you unfold some of the glories of this pre-eminent perfection. You have, however, shrouded it in a mantle of darkness, by asserting that God before all worlds decreed, that one part of mankind should never be objects of his goodness, but were eternally doomed to never-ending torments to benefit the elect. What becomes of the goodness of God, while he is represented as dooming myriads of intelligent beings, not excepting the innocent child of a day old, to eternal torments, merely because he *would*? Do you say, not so; “they are sent to hell, because they were sinners.” But according to your doctrine, they were as much doing the will of heaven while committing sin, as the saints are while surrounding the throne of God—For, you say God hath decreed all the sins in the universe, and that his decrees are perfectly according to his pleasure. And is it an act of goodness to punish his creatures everlastingly, for doing his will? Has not Jesus Christ said, that whosoever doeth the will of his heavenly Father, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven? And do you not roundly assert that all things are according to his will and pleasure? And considering the saying of Jesus Christ just alluded to, how will you prove that the reprobate is damned any more than the elect, agreeably to your “scheme.” This therefore is another reason why your doctrine is false, because it annihilates the

goodness of God, and leads you to contradict Jesus Christ, the *true witness*.

5. *Truth* is always consistent with itself. If therefore we embrace a system of truth, it will not contradict itself—and as God is a being of immutable truth, he can neither lie, nor contradict *himself*. But the system you endeavour to defend cannot be true, because it is self-contradictory. In the first place you say, every event is brought about by the Almighty; and in p. 11, you quote 2 Sam. xvii. 14, *For the Lord had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel*, and then add, “Ahithophel’s counsel was frustrated, because it was contrary to the counsel of him who says, *My counsel shall stand, I will do all my pleasure.*” Was not the counsel of Ahithophel an event? and you say all events are brought about by the Lord; and yet here you say, it was *contrary* to the Lord’s counsel. Do you mean to maintain that the Lord’s counsels are in opposition one to the other, as you intimate his decrees and commands are? In p. 4, you say, “That every event which occurs is a part of his perfect plan.” Yet in the case of Ahithophel, which certainly was one of “every event,” you assert that it was *contrary* to this “perfect plan,” and of course not included in it. In p. 22, you say, “Nothing could be more abhorrent to his nature” than for the Jews to cause their children to pass through the fire to Moloch; although according to your former statement, it was “included in the perfect plan” “brought to pass by God,” and according to “his

pleasure.” Are then those events which God brings about himself, which are consequently according to his good pleasure, and included in his plan, so odious to him, that, “nothing can be more abhorrent to his nature?” How will you reconcile these flat and palpable contradictions? P. 26, “If the decrees of God” respect all events, and are eternal and immutable, then all his enemies may despair of accomplishing their purposes.” “If the decrees of God respect *all events*,” and all are according “to his eternal purpose,” pray tell me what event is not included among *all events*, and what purpose can be opposed to his purposes. Are not all the events and purposes of all the enemies of God, included among *all events* and *every purpose*, which you say are brought about by God himself! How then can you consistently talk about events and purposes, in contradistinction from the events and purposes of God, seeing “He brings every thing to pass which is brought to pass.” This is another instance of your contradictory assertions; and it is as much impossible for a man to believe both sides of a *contradiction true*, as it is to reconcile Hopkianism with the oracles of God. Credulous minds may be fascinated for a season, by the sorceries of error; but they can never be brought understandingly to embrace a “scheme” manifestly contradictory in itself. It must therefore be from inattention, indifference, or want of spiritual light, that men profess faith in such glaring absurdities as you have advanced. If a man had set himself to work

on purpose to blacken the character of God by the most vile misrepresentations, he could not have done it more effectually than you have done, I hope undesignedly, in your sermons, especially the first and third. For no man could impute more than all the wickedness, that ever has been, is, and will be, to him ; and this you have done by saying that “ He brings to pass every thing which is brought to pass ;” unless by some extraordinary effort, you are able to prove that sin is *no-thing*, that is, *nothing*. Seeing therefore that such is the natural tendency of your doctrine, it must be false, because God is just, wise, holy and true.

6. It might be added in the sixth place, that your doctrine destroys the immutability of God. From the immutability of his counsel, we may suppose that he never alters any of his designs. In the account Moses has given of the creation of the world, it is said at the conclusion of the whole, *And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.* Man, at this time was holy—He afterwards became unholy—and if this change was an effect purely of an act of God, which it must have been, if all things are brought to pass by him, then God changed his design—he first designed man should be *holy*, and afterwards that he should be *unholy* ; unless you can make it appear that holiness and unholiness are one and the same, or that God designed he should be holy and unholy at the same time, which is a contradiction. Moreover, it seems

evident, that, had not sin entered into the world, man would not have been subject to death—such was his nature, viewed in connexion with surrounding circumstances. The design then of the Almighty appears to have been that man should be immortal in his pristine state. To suppose therefore that sin was brought about by God, by which Adam's nature was so far changed that he became mortal, is to suppose that God's design toward Adam was changed—unless you suppose he designed him immortal and mortal at the same time, which is a contradiction, and therefore impossible. But by admitting the designs of God were immutably the same towards man, and that he designed him to be good, holy, and immortal ; and that man voluntarily and unnecessarily sinned against the law of his nature, or the law of God, and thereby made himself bad, unholy, and mortal, we secure the immutability of God, and place mutability to man's account, where it properly belongs. The contrary sentiment transfers it from man to God, and thereby impeaches him with a defect foreign to his nature ; and therefore that sentiment is not founded in truth.

II. 1. I proceed in the second place to notice the texts of scripture by which you attempt to support your inconsistent notion of predestination ; and as you lay the greatest stress upon those respecting the crucifixion of Christ, they will be noticed first. Luke xxii. 22. *And truly the Son of man goeth as it was determined ; but woe unto that man by whom*

*he is betrayed.** “This scripture,” say you, “can mean nothing less than this, That God had determined that his Son should be betrayed by Judas.” p. 13. By what rule of criticism will you make the determination here spoken of refer to God? *It*, is the nominative to the verb *determined*, which does not necessarily refer to the determination of God, who is not mentioned in the connexion of the passage. Why may it not as well refer to the determination of Judas, who is spoken of in the preceding 21st verse, *Behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.* The supposition that

* *ὁρισμενον* (*orismenon*) here translated *determined*, is a participle of the present or imperfect tense, or paulo post. fut. and may be rendered, *determining*, or *about to determine*. There is no word in the greek, from which our translators have translated the helping verb, *was*, thereby carrying the mind back to some indeterminate period, as Mr. Williston supposes, before the world began, when, it is supposed, God determined *Judas* should betray Christ. Allowing the above criticism to be accurate, we might read the text thus, “Truly the Son of man goeth as *is determining*, or about to be determined presently,” (by Judas and the chief priests) “but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed.” That it is not necessary to suppose that because the verb *ὁρισμενον*, is used, it must have reference to an *eternal* determination of God, is evident from Acts xi. 29, where the same word *ὁρίσας*, is used to signify the *determination* of the disciples to send *relief* to the brethren which dwelt in Judea. The same word therefore is used to denote the *determination* of man, and the determination of God, Acts ii. 23. No argument therefore can be inferred from the word, simply considered, to induce us to refer the determination spoken of in Luke xxii. 22, to God; and the context, as has been seen, leads to a contrary conclusion. The reader, however, must judge for himself.

the determination refers either to Judas, or the Sanhedrim, is strengthened by what is said in verses 2—6. *And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him: for they feared the people.—Then entered Satan into Judas, surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them. And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money. And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude.* From this scripture it appears there was a collusion between Judas, and the chief priests and captains, in which they counselled together how they might apprehend Jesus Christ. They stipulated to give Judas money, and he agreed to betray him. All this was perfectly known to Jesus, and therefore he spoke of the treacherous conduct of his disciple, Judas, and of the determination which was forming thereon among the chief priests. It appears therefore “that the text may,” without any violence, “mean” something “less than this, That *God had determined* his Son should be betrayed by Judas.” The most natural meaning is, That the Son of man was now going to be betrayed according to the determination which resulted from the consultation between the chief priests and Judas—the whole context leads to this conclusion. To suppose that God, from all eternity determined that Judas should betray the Lord Jesus into the hands of wicked men, is to transfer the guilt of his whole conduct from Judas to God,

This indeed, is an easy method to solve any difficulties in human conduct, by saying God decreed they should be so, and so here is an end of the matter. It also completely absolves every man from blame, however wicked he may be, and makes God the only responsible agent in the universe.

2. You also quote Acts ii. 23. *Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain*, and then add, "That the crucifixion of Christ by the wicked Jews, was according to the determinate counsel or fixed purpose of God," p. 14. That this, and other similar passages of scripture may be satisfactorily explained, it is important to notice the principle on which your mistaken application of them, is founded. According to your statement, the events spoken of respecting the wickedness of the Jews, and others, in the crucifixion of Jesus, were the result solely of the predetermination of God—this preordination is the *cause*, and the events the *effect*. Likewise that the predictions respecting those events, are predicated, not of God's *prescience*, but of his *foreordination*. But according to the scriptural representation of this subject, these wicked events, or actions, were the result of free-agency abused—and the predictions of the Jewish prophets respecting them, were predicated, not of a predetermination of God that they *should be so*, but of his infinite *prescience* which saw that they *would be so*—so that neither the prescience of God, nor the predictions of the prophets were the *cause* of such.

wicked actions. God, foreseeing that there would be such a traitorous man as Judas, and such persons, as were Pilate and the Jews, might determine, not that they should possess these evil dispositions, nor that they should be directed in that identical channel, but to overrule them when so possessed and directed, for the manifestation of his own infinite glory. To illustrate this by a comparison—General Washington, previous to his death, foretold that factions would arise in the United States, which would disturb the tranquility of the union—but it does not follow from thence, that either he himself, or his predictions, were the cause of the rise of such factions. So God predicted that there would be such a person as Judas, and such persons as were the Jews, who by abusing their moral agency, would do thus and so wickedly; but from thence it does not follow, that either he himself, or his predictions were the *cause* of their wickedness. This distinction being kept in mind, it is easy to explain the text under consideration, without supposing God from all eternity, ordained the wickedness of the Jews, and the treachery of Judas. *Him, being delivered, according the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, &c.* From the infinite knowledge of God, he saw that man would sin, and involve himself and his posterity in misery; according to this knowledge, his wise *counsel* led him to *determine* to deliver his Son to die for the transgressors; and hence it was said by Paul, *He was delivered for our offences.* As the penalty of the

law which Adam disobeyed, was *death*, and as Christ came to bear that penalty, it was necessary he should *die*; but it does not follow that it was necessary, any farther than their own voluntary conduct made it necessary, that Judas should betray *him with a kiss*, and that the Jews should smite him with *wicked hands*. The determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God therefore, do not refer to his being crucified and slain with wicked hands, but to his being *delivered up as a sacrifice for sin*. If you say the atonement could not have been completed without the aid of the wicked hands of the Jews, you thereby transfer a part of the merit of Christ's death to them, to whom it does not belong, and thus rob Christ of his deserved honour. That God so overruled their wickedness, as to make it subservient to his benevolent purposes to mankind, is admitted; but it should be noted, that there is a vast difference between *overruling* the wickedness of the wicked, and between *producing* and *causing efficiently*, as you assert he does, such wickedness.— This will also explain what is meant *by God's meaning it for good*, that Joseph's brethren should sell him into Egypt. He did not *produce* nor *cause*, the wicked, and murderous dispositions, in these brethren; but he *checked, restrained, and overruled* them, according to his good pleasure, and thus made them subserve his purposes of future good to mankind.

3. If you still insist that the crucifixion of Christ was the *cause* of his death, and that all the circumstances of it were absolutely necessary, it will fol-

low that they forcibly took his life away from him—and this is expressly contradictory to the solemn declaration of Christ himself, John x. 17, 18. *Because I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.* In these words the Lord Jesus claims the *peculiar* prerogative of laying down his life, and of taking it up again. And you might as well say, that the soldiers who were placed to guard the sepulchre, and all the accompanying conduct of the rulers were necessary to raise Christ from the dead, as to say their wickedness was necessary to bring about his death. The one is mentioned with as much minuteness and precision as the other.—But say you, “all these things were predicted.” Granted.—But these predictions were predicated not of the necessity of the events, but of the infinite prescience of God, which saw that his only Son would meet with such inhuman and barbarous treatment from his *kinsmen according to the flesh*. All those scenes of love and mercy, of forbearance and kindness on the one hand, and of malice and hatred, of malevolence and cruelty on the other, were portrayed, as it were, on the infinite mind; and also, by the eternal spirit, painted upon the imagination of the inspired Prophets who foretold them; but it was seen at the same time, the *causes* of these evils originated in the hearts of the people, and not in a predetermination of God; and that the

meritorious death of Christ was a voluntary sacrifice, originating from the unbounded love of God to sinful man. To say that God delivered Christ into the hands of Pilate, is to say that he, God, was a greater sinner than were the Jews, agreeably to the words of Christ, *He that delivered me unto thee, hath the greater sin.*

4. You next quote from chap. iv. 27, 28. *For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.* On this you observe, "The whole which was done by the murderers of Christ, Jews and Gentiles, kings and people, is said to be the same which the divine hand and counsel determined before to be done." p. 14. Is it not truly surprising that in any passage where good and evil are spoken of as having been done, that any one should without hesitation, refer the evil especially, immediately to God, as though there were no other agent in the universe who could do it? By a little transposition of the above passage, we have a scriptural and rational sense, without being under the disagreeable necessity of attributing all the wickedness of the murderers of our Lord Jesus to God, out of whose mouth *proceedeth not evil and good.*

For of a truth, both Herod and Pontius Pilate with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together against thy holy child Jesus, whom

*thou hast anointed to do, whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.** According to

* It may be observed that Ποιησαι, is in the infinitive mood, 1. Aorist, and therefore, being indefinite as to person and number, may very properly be construed with Τοῦ ἁγίου παῖδα σου Ἰησοῦν, *thy holy child Jesus*, without any violation of the rules of grammar. In Luke i. 72. the same verb Ποιησαι occurs, and the only antecedent to this verb is in verse 68—*Blessed be the Lord God of Israel*. That our translators understood the verb in both places in this *indefinite* sense, is evident from their having rendered it so in their English translation *to do, to perform*,

The observations of the Rev. John Fletcher on the above passage, are worthy of notice. He remarks in vol. iv. p. 69. note—"With Episcopus, and some other learned critics, I doubt it is not" rightly translated. "Why should it not read thus—Acts iv. 26—28. The rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed [both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together] for to do whatsoever thy hand and counsel determined before to be done." By putting the clause "Both Herod," &c. in a parenthesis, we have this evangelical sense, which gives no handle to the pleaders for sin, *Both Herod and Pontius Pilate, &c. were gathered together against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done*. I prefer this reading to the common one for the following reasons: (1) It is perfectly agreeable to the Greek; and the *peculiar* construction of the sentence is expressive of the *peculiar* earnestness with which the Apostle prayed. (2) It is attended with no Manichean inconveniency. (3) It is more agreeable to the context. For if the Sanhedrim were *gathered together by God's directions and decree*, in order to threaten the Apostles, with what propriety could they say, v. 29, "Now Lord behold their threatnings"? And (4), It is strongly supported by v. 30. where Peter [after having observed, v. 27, 28, according to our reading, that God had anointed his holy child Jesus, to do all the miracles which

this construction all the words are retained, but by a different arrangement of the members of the sentence, we have this scriptural doctrine taught us, viz. That both Herod and Pontius Pilate, and the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together against the Lord Jesus, whom God had anointed to do whatsoever his hand and counsel determined before to be done. This is perfectly agreeable to the saying of Isaiah, lxi. 1. *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me ; because the Lord*

he did on earth] prays that now Christ is gone to heaven, the effects of this powerful anointing may continue, and *signs and wonders may still BE DONE*, by the name of his holy child Jesus ”

This interpretation is moreover “strongly supported” by what follows in verse 31—“And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together ; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost ; and they spake the word of God with boldness.” Here was another instance of the fulfilment of the promise of Christ, to give them the Holy Spirit to lead them into all truth, in answer to their earnest prayer. So that Christ continued *to do* what the hand and counsel of God determined *to be done*, and thereby accomplish the *end* for which he was *anointed*.

Compare also the text under consideration, with the second Psalm. *Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing ? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, &c.* This prediction was a prospective narration of the illegal and wicked conduct of those rulers and people, who were gathered together *against him whom God had anointed* to make atonement for sin, and *to do* those miracles which were calculated to convince the Gentiles of his power and authority over all things—So that, notwithstanding their combined opposition, the heathen should be given to him for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.

hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captive, &c. Compare this with the text in question, and with the 30th verse—
 “By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be *done* by the name of thy holy child Jesus,” and then say if there be not very strong reasons for believing, that the verb *to do* refers to the Lord Jesus, and not to Herod, &c. But consult the note.

It should furthermore be noticed that the text says, Herod and Pontius Pilate, &c. were gathered together *against* the Lord. If they were fulfilling the determinate counsel, and doing what the hand and counsel of the Lord determined before to be done, how could they be acting *against* the Lord? Do people act *against* the Lord, when they go perfectly according to his counsel? This consideration itself is sufficient to convince any man who is not blinded by partial attachment to a favourite creed, that *your* interpretation cannot be correct.

5. You proceed—“It is a most unnatural evasion of the force of this passage, to explain it so as to make it mean, that the wicked murderers of our Lord came together to do their duty, even all whatsoever God had commanded them should be done,” p. 14. In this I heartily join with you. But pray sir, who gave it this explanation? Have you not been labouring with all your might to prove that every circumstance “in the tragical” sufferings, and death of our Lord were perfectly according to the

determinate counsel of God? And when men fulfil the counsel of God, do they not do their duty? Or must they act contrary to that counsel in order to do their duty? Or will you here say also that God's commands and counsels are opposite? If so, when do we do our duty, when we obey the command, or when we fulfil his counsel? And how am I to know what the counsel is, but by the command? Has God revealed the secret counsel to *you*? But were you to resort to this poor evasion, it would not help the matter any; for according to your doctrine, even this opposition and contrariety, is all according to the counsel of his will, which you say, "includes every event," so that God "brings to pass every thing which is brought to pass"—consequently, let a man do what he will, however wicked, believe what he may, however absurd, it is all according to the counsel of God's will! "How, indeed, must the omniscient God look upon such explanations of his word?" "Let an expositor take such liberties with the whole Bible, and he might as well make a new Bible at once, and then he would be no longer troubled with the old one, but might believe what he pleased," p. 14, 15. True enough; for what good does the Bible do us, if there be a decree which is contrary to the commands recorded in the Bible; and if we are governed by a secret, irresistible influence? When a man can persuade himself, *That God ordains sin, and yet forbids it,—that all things are according to the counsel of his will, and yet that many things are opposed to this counsel,* (see. p. 11.) *that all things are according to God's good pleasure, and*

yet, that many things are displeasing to him, and “abhorrent to his holy nature,”—that a man acts against the Lord, while doing according to the determinate counsel of his will.—I say, when a man can persuade himself to believe in such obvious contradictions, he may not only give up the Bible, which contains a consistent system of truth, but he may also give up reason and common sense.*

* “But since such a comment has been given, &c.” p. 15. Here you have, perhaps undesignedly, misrepresented my arguments by intimating that I asserted, the Jews, when crucifying Christ, were *doing their duty*—Whereas nothing could be farther from my thoughts. “The disputant on the Arminian side” it is true said, “that the counsel of the Lord meant his revealed will,” and also that it was revealed, impostors should die, and that consequently the Jews were assembled together to put Christ to death *as an impostor*—And he is of the same opinion still. They certainly never put him to death *as the Son of God*. They said he was a Samaritan, and had a devil, John viii. 43. So careful were they not to have him crucified *as the promised Messiah*, nor *as the real King of the Jews*, that they requested Pilate to alter the inscription on the cross. *Write not*, said they, *The King of the Jews*; but *that he said, I am the King of the Jews*, John xix. 21. From these passages, and indeed from the whole affair, it is evident, that they believed, or *pretended to believe*, Christ was an impostor; and therefore, *as such*, they crucified him. Is it just then for you to represent me as saying that they *did do their duty*? They *pretended to do this*, I grant, and so must you. *If he were not a malefactor*, said they, *we would not have delivered him unto thee*, John xviii. 30. Who can avoid seeing from these words, that they considered him a *malefactor*, and as this was directly the reverse from the character he claimed, they accused him of *imposture*. And that they plead a *legal sentence* against him is evident from these words, *We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the*

6. From the comment you have given to the above-mentioned texts, you seem to suppose that it was absolutely necessary for Christ to be crucified with *wicked hands*, in order to bring about his death, p. 16—18. That it was indispensably necessary that Christ should *die* to make an atonement for sin, is unquestionably true. But to suppose he died only in consequence of being nailed to the cross, with the other barbarous acts of his enemies, is to account for his death in an ordinary way; that is, in a way any one else might have died with the same

Son of God, *ibid* xix. 7. Their argument was this—*He maketh himself the Son of God*; but *we* consider him a *malefactor*, a perverter of the nation; and as he *pretends* to be what *he is* not, he is therefore an impostor, and we accordingly demand sentence of condemnation against him. But can you fairly infer from this statement of *facts*, that the enemies, and accusers of the Lord Jesus *did do* their duty? If their accusations had been predicated of *truth*, when they called him an impostor, they would have done their duty; and this was what I contended for in the debate.

Whether this was the meaning or not of the above text, is another question. I grant that I gave it as my opinion in the public debate; but upon more mature consideration, I think I was mistaken; but a misunderstanding of an insulated passage of scripture, by no means affects the main question, which is amply supported by other texts. However, as it is disingenious to contend for an erroneous interpretation of scripture, after being convinced, I freely give it up. But remember, I do not give up my former exposition, to embrace *yours*, which I consider far worse—neither have your unscriptural arguments convinced me. If, indeed, Christ had been an impostor, as they said he was, they would have done their duty by putting him to death, because this was the *revealed will of God* respecting impostors. And that God's counsel is

treatment. Whereas his conception and death were both miraculous. To deny this, is to strip his sufferings and death of all that merit which the scriptures uniformly ascribe to them. But if miraculous, as it certainly was, he did not die by crucifixion—and this is farther evident from his own words, before quoted, *I lay down my life—I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again*: And after having sufficiently suffered to answer *the wonderful design of love*, it is said, *He gave up the ghost, or dismissed his spirit*. His sufferings and his death were all voluntary. Furthermore when the soldiers came to break the legs of those who hung on the cross, they broke the legs of the two malefactors, but when they came to Jesus, they brake not his legs, because he was already dead, and Pilate *marvelled that he was so soon dead*, John xix. 32, 33.

his revealed will, I still contend, because I know of no other counsel, but that which he has revealed.

Respecting those who crucified the Lord Jesus, having done their duty, so long as you contend as you have done, that their wicked conduct was decreed, and therefore absolutely necessary, you must admit that they did do their duty, (although contrary to his prohibition, *Touch not mine anointed*) “even all that the Lord had” decreed; and therefore all those consequences which you have inferred from my observations, retort upon yourself—For if as you insinuate, God hath a *decretal will*, contrary to that *revealed in the Bible*, the latter is entirely superceded by the former; and therefore you “may give up the Bible, and believe what you please.” Is it not surprising that you should profess to derive your knowledge of the *decretal will from the Bible*, and yet suppose it contrary to what is revealed in the Bible? Wonderful discovery!

Mark xv. 44. This is another evidence that he did not die by crucifixion ; and if crucifixion was not the *cause* of his death, it was not essentially necessary to bring it about. If it be asked how else he could have died ? It is answered, that it is not absolutely necessary to answer this question ; for what might have been done, had the state of the moral world been different from what it was, we cannot tell—However we have some data to guide our minds even in this critical enquiry. Christ said in his submissive prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, while agonizing under the weight of divine justice, *My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death—* Matth. xxvi. 38, 39. Christ never spoke without meaning ; and while he was sweating as it were *great drops of blood*, no doubt but the pungent agonies of death were already on him—but *being in an agony, he prayed the more earnestly*, that the cup of divine indignation might, for the present, *pass from him*. This prayer was heard, agreeably to the declaration of the apostle, Heb. v. 7. *Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, AND WAS HEARD, in that he feared.* Collate this passage with our Saviour's prayer—*My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto DEATH. He offered up—strong crying and tears to him that was able to save him FROM DEATH, and was heard.* Now it is certain he was not *ultimately saved from death* ; because he did die, while hanging upon the cross.—

The death, therefore, from which he was saved, was that, the bitter pangs of which was indicated by his profuse sweat, and by the extreme agony of his soul, and which he began to feel while in the garden. It is therefore both scriptural and reasonable to conclude, that if the weight of divine justice, which was armed with terrible vengeance against sinners, and which Christ came to suffer in our stead, had not been suspended, he would have expired under its mighty load in the garden.

But, say you, "If Christ had not been crucified with wicked hands, &c. the predictions would have failed of their accomplishment." Granted—But if the Almighty had not foreseen, that Judas would betray him, and that the Jews would crucify him, there would have been no predictions respecting these events. The events themselves were a secondary cause of the predictions ; for they were all present to the eternal mind, from whom nothing is hid. It is not contended that Christ *was not crucified* ; but that crucifixion was not the immediate *cause* of his death. And the *wilful* and *voluntary* treachery of Judas, and the horrid and unnecessitated rebellion of the Jews, made it necessary, so far as such human and wicked agents can make any thing necessary, for Jesus to be crucified. This necessity, however, did not arise from an eternal order of God, that they *should and must do so*, and therefore could not have done otherwise.

7. There can be no doubt that God *worketh all things after the counsel of his own will* ; but it is not

according to the *counsel of his will*, that man should sin. This is evident from the prohibitory command, *Thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*, Gen ii. 17. As we know of no other counsel, than that revealed in the Bible, we think ourselves justifiable in believing it contrary to God's will for man to *sin*; because such is the revelation, which he has given of his will throughout the whole scriptures. As then the counsel of his will is always according to *justice, holiness, truth, wisdom, and goodness*, he could not, consistently with his nature, *will*, that man should be *unjust, unholy, untrue, unwise, and bad*. All therefore which is said in the scriptures respecting God's doing *His pleasure*, and *working all things after the counsel of his will* must be so interpreted as to exclude all *injustice, unholiness*, and every other species of *wickedness* from the works and ways of God. When God had finished his work of creation in six days, it is said *all was very good*. But as yet, *sin* had not been introduced. Your reference therefore to the work of creation, to prove that *all sin* is after the counsel of his will, is foreign to the point. To make this answer your purpose, you must first prove that *sin is very good*, and that *sin* was included among the works of God, in the six days of creation. But this you can no more do, than you can prove that *holiness* is *sinful*. These things being considered, it is truly surprising that you should refer to this sublime display of the power and wisdom of God, to support your doctrine that God has included all sin, even "every sin in

the universe" in his "perfect plan." God willeth that man should not sin, but be holy ; and therefore, if he worketh all things according to the counsel of his will, he cannot be the "*efficient cause*" of those sinful actions, which the scriptures ascribe exclusively to wicked men and devils.

8. Taking this idea along with us, we may have a scriptural and consistent interpretation of those scriptures which you have quoted in p. 11, 12, 13, to prove your doctrine ; without imputing "all the sins in the universe" to the Almighty. Prov. xix. 21. *There are many devices in a man's heart ; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand. Here the counsel of the Lord, is put in opposition to the many devices in a man's heart.* In this passage therefore there are some things mentioned which are not after *the counsel of his will*, even all those evil devices, *which are in a man's heart*. This you admit, by saying that the "devices in the hearts of Joseph's brethren" to "kill him," to "leave him in the pit," to "restore him to his father," did not agree with the counsel of the Lord," and therefore "did not stand," p. 12. Is it not surprising that you should quote this text to prove that "every sin in the universe is decreed," and then in your comment admit that there were many sinful devices, in the heart of Joseph's brethren which "did not agree with the counsel of the Lord?" Are *all things agreeable* to God's counsel, and many things *disagreeable* to it? O error, how dost thou bind thy admirers with the knot of contradiction ! The text un-

der consideration is a full confirmation of our doctrine, that the counsel of the Lord, which is always according to righteousness, shall stand, although there may be a thousand evil devices in men's hearts against it; for *there is no wisdom, nor understanding nor counsel against the Lord*, Prov. xxi. 30.—

“This,” say you, “cannot mean, that men form no projects or schemes, to oppose the Lord; or which, if carried into execution, would not mar the work of his hands; but this is undoubtedly meant, that his counsel will stand in spite of them,” p. 12.

Here is some truth and some error. By admitting that men form “projects or schemes” to oppose the Lord, you admit what we contend for, and thereby contradict your main proposition, That all events, (for certainly “projects and schemes” are events) are after the counsel of his will. But when you insinuate that none of the “projects or schemes” of the wicked “are carried into execution,” you contradict fact. Was not the wicked project of Cain carried into execution, when he slew his brother? Was not the wicked “project” of David carried into execution, when he ordered *Joab* to put *Uriah* in the front of the battle, that he might die? Or will you say that these, and a thousand other murderous “projects or schemes” were according to the counsel of the Lord? But if murderous and adulterous “projects and devices” are not against the Lord, pray tell what are? Psal. cxv. 3. *But our God is in the heavens, he hath done whatsoever he pleased*; also, cxxxv. 6., *Whatsoever the Lord*

pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and in all deep places, p. 12. You quote and apply these precious texts of scripture, as if you thought we disbelieved that God did whatever he pleases. This we never doubted. But the question is, whether he pleases to work sin in the hearts and lives of sinners ; or whether he pleased to ordain “all the sin in the universe.” So you assert, and to substantiate this sentiment, so dishonourable to God, you quote these scriptures. But that they were never designed to support such an horrid sentiment, is abundantly manifest from the clearest testimony of scripture. Psal. v. 4—6, *For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness : neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight : thou hatest all workers of iniquity. Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing : the Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.* According to these texts of scripture, the Lord is so far from being *pleased* with *sin*, that it is said in a solemn appeal to him in prayer, That he *hath not pleasure in wickedness*,—that he *hateth all workers of iniquity*,---that he *will abhor the bloody and deceitful man*. According to your doctrine he hath decreed all things, he “brings every thing to pass, which is brought to pass,” and that all things are not only according to the counsel of his will, but according to his pleasure. The north and south poles are not more opposite one to the other, than are these sentiments of yours, and the doctrine expressed in the above passages of scripture. Can the

Almighty be pleased with that which his soul hateth? Again: Jer. xxxii. 35. *To cause their sons and daughters to pass through the fire unto Moloch, which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.* Could the Almighty ordain and decree that which never came into his mind that they *should do*, and which he *commanded not*? This text is as pointed against your sentiment as any thing can be.--- You say God is the “efficient cause” of sin---the text says, *they caused* Judah to sin. Which shall we believe in this case? *Let God be true, and every man, who dare contradict him, a liar.*

9. You have a curious remark on this text, p. 22: After labouring to prove what we never denied, nor no one else, that God *knew* they would do these abominations, you say, “But this does not prove that God did not determine to give them up to do these things.” They were doubtless left to follow their own free will in this respect, as well as in all others. But what has this *giving up* to do with your principle, which asserts, that this very abominable thing which his *soul hateth*, is nevertheless according to the counsel of his will? Nay, that he decreed it from all eternity. But how is this idea, respecting their being given “up to do these things,” consistent with what you say in the note, p. 23? “If all God did to sinners was merely to withdraw from them, and leave their hearts to put forth independent volitions (if this were possible), though it might account for their continuance in sin, yet it would

not account for their committing just such sins as they do." In the first place, when a noted passage of scripture stood in the way of your decrees, you could abandon them, by turning Arminian, and talk about their being given "up to do these things;" but lest some of your readers should suspect you did not implicitly follow Dr. Hopkins and others, you return to your *decrees*, and tell us it will not do merely to say they are "left," or "given up," because that will not account for their "committing just such sins as they do." Did those wicked people only "continue in sin," in a general way, when they made their children pass through the fire to Moloch, or did they commit "*just such sins as they did*"? Their particular sin seems to be designated with much precision by the Prophet, so that we may safely conclude that they committed "just such sins as they did;" and therefore according to your "foundation work," it was decreed; and yet according to your comment they were only "given up" to do it; but according to the express declaration of the Prophet, which is of more value than a thousand such quibbling comments, it was neither decreed nor commanded. "God decreed that they should commit just such sins as they do;" and yet there are some sins which he only gave them up to do"—so says your doctrine; and I think it will puzzle you a little to prove both assertions true, and reconcile the various contradictions which have "arisen to view" in the examination of this sub-

ject. You are, however, bound to do it, or give up your system.

From the above cited scriptures, (and many more of a similar import might be added) I think it is unequivocally proved, that God has not foreordained whatsoever comes to pass. For it is impossible he should ordain that in which he *hath no pleasure*, which he *hateth*, and which his soul *abhorreth*, and which never came *into his mind they should do*, and which he *commanded not*.

10. I cannot but notice another instance of your method of confounding things which have no connexion. In the case of Joseph and his brethren, you confound God's providential manner of restraining, checking, and overruling the evil propensities and designs of these wicked brethren, and so making them subservient to his purpose, with his having decreed from all eternity that they should possess those evil propensities, and that they should form those wicked designs, and that they should be directed in that particular way. If the world had not been wicked, if the Egyptians had not been sunk into idolatry and sensuality, if the brethren of Joseph had not been jealous traitors, and if the Canaanites had not been grievous sinners against God, there would have been no necessity for the slavery of Joseph, the scourge of famine, the ten successive plagues of Egypt, &c. These were events which originated from the depravity and wickedness of the times, and not from a predetermining cause in the infinitely holy God. Things being as

they were, through the prevalence of the wicked and perverse conduct of men, God so checked and overruled their nefarious designs, by his particular providence, as to make them subserve the development of his benevolent purposes to the sons of men. The scourge of famine was sent upon the land of Canaan, to punish its inhabitants for their wickedness, and Joseph's brethren for their hatred to him, and duplicity to their aged father; while Joseph was highly exalted in Egypt, as a reward for his fidelity, and *to keep much people alive*. To effect this gracious purpose, the murderous disposition of his brethren was checked, and their hearts turned to sell him. All this may be seen, and the hand of God adored, without resorting to the horrid idea that God from all eternity decreed the wickedness of all these nations and people, that he might have an opportunity to display his sovereignty in punishing them in this life with temporal plagues, and in the life to come, with everlasting torments. In all the abovementioned transactions, we see wisdom and mercy, contrasted with folly and malevolence.

11. So also, your observations in page 25, seem founded on the erroneous supposition that the providence of God is only seen and acknowledged in connexion with *your doctrine of decrees*; whereas nothing can be more incorrect. God governs the world in wisdom. He rules mankind as free, responsible agents, and not by a dire necessity, as your doctrine supposes. And we have no hesita-

tion in saying, because both scripture and the nature of things dictate it to us, that the wise and benevolent providence of God, extends to all causes and events, and that it so checks and restrains the evil designs of the wicked, and guides, directs, and nourishes the good designs of the righteous, as to make them all tend to his own infinite glory, and the ultimate good of those who love him, and keep his commandments. So that although he did not decree that mankind should sin, yet out of tender compassion to them, he has provided a sovereign remedy for all their maladies ; and mercifully assists those who are willing to accept of its healing influence, in making a saving application of it to their souls. He daily feeds and nourishes his faithful children with the consolations of his Spirit, and the sincere milk of his word, that they may grow up into Christ in all things, who is their living head. *He maketh the sun to rise on the just and unjust, and sendeth rain upon the evil and the good. He watereth the earth that it may bud, and bring forth fruit abundantly for man and beast. His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace.* Every good and every perfect gift cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. And in all the works and ways of God, we see no spots of impurity, no signs of eternal hatred to one part of the human family, stiled *reprobates*. Your unfounded notion of decrees, and the scriptural doctrine of providence, are as different as are the supreme deities

worshipped by the Persians, which you have mentioned.* Your system makes all evil originate in the author of all good,—whereas the other represents him as seated upon a throne of justice, goodness and wisdom, governing the world in righteousness, forbidding and restraining sin, as far as is consistent with man's nature as a responsible agent; and encouraging holiness in his creatures, by all those commanding motives which are adapted to the nature, circumstances, and capacity of probationers for eternity. We are not therefore under

* The following texts have been supposed to support the doctrine of foreordination. I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things. Isa. xlv. 6, 7. No doubt but God designed in these words to assert his sovereign authority over all things, in opposition to the peurile notion of the Persians, who invented the doctrine of two supreme Deities, the one the author of *light* and *peace*, the other the author of *darkness* and *evil*. In the beginning God made the heavens, and the earth, and divided the light from the darkness. After man had rebelled, God sent the *evil* of expulsion from paradise upon him, as a just punishment for his disobedience. And in every age of the world God inflicts temporal judgments upon mankind for their wickedness. *Is there evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it.* Plague, pestilence, sword and famine, are all the messengers of his vengeance which he sends upon cities devoted to wickedness. Every man ought to know that there is a difference between *moral* and *natural* evil. The latter is often, and perhaps always, a judicial punishment, which the Lord inflicts upon sinners for their *immoral* conduct. But if *moral* evil is also created by the Almighty, so that sinners perfectly answer the mind of God when guilty of it, how can they be justly punished for it?

the necessity of seeking shelter, under your heterogeneous doctrine of decrees, in order to avoid the phantasm of chance. Those who attribute this fairy doctrine to us, are as unjust as your doctrine represents God to be; which says, that he from all eternity decreed that men should fulfil the counsel of his will by sinning, and then sends them to hell for so doing.

12. In page 6, you say "These decrees also made it sure, that no more rational creatures would apostatize, or remain in apostacy, than the greatest good of the universe made necessary." As this is a favourite argument with all the Hopkinsian writers, it may not be amiss to spend a few thoughts upon it. The greatest good of the universe must be the greatest number of intelligent creatures made happy. In regard to God himself, he is, from the essential properties of his nature, happy—supremely so. If therefore the decrees of God respect the greatest good of the universe, he must have sought the happiness of all his intelligent creatures. For certainly the greatest possible good of the universe, would be the order, harmony, and perfection of the whole, both in the physical and moral world. According to this mode of reasoning, take *your decrees* for the *data*, universalism would be the result. But such a result is expressly contradicted by scripture. Now, if we lay down a first principle, from which a conclusion necessarily follows, which contradicts an established and admitted fact, that principle must be false.

On this ground therefore your principle is proved false. The end proposed by it is not obtained, and therefore it is not good. No doubt but God sought the greatest good of the universe, consistently with his own nature, and the nature of man—and consistently with these natures, the greatest good is obtained, because man refuses to have more—A part of the human family choose death in the error of their ways. And to have made man a necessary agent, would have been to make him any thing besides an intelligent creature. What would have been the result of such a state of things, we cannot tell, because we have no *fact* to reason from. But if God have decreed all things, and that consequently all things are according to his will; and if, nevertheless, a part are miserable after all, it argues either a want of goodness or power; so that all you say about the “greatest good of the universe,” amounts to nothing.

13. To say that the Almighty *could not* make all men happy, is to limit his *power*; and to say he *would not*, is to circumscribe his goodness. Because, on your principle, the agency of man is out of the question; for your doctrine totally destroys this characteristic of man, and renders him incapable of acting any otherwise than irresistible decrees dictate.

14. What would be said of the father of a family, who should place one half of his family in such circumstances, that they must unavoidably be miserable all the days of their lives; and then, in excuse

for his conduct should say, “ I have done thus to seek the greatest good of my whole family.” But had you not property enough to support them all comfortably ? “ Yes ; but my other children would not have beheld my particular kindness so conspicuously, unless I had also manifested my indignation against a part of my family.” Supposing any of these poor reprobated children should presume to complain of their hard fate, and it should be said to them, “ Your benevolent father is just and good, you must not complain, nor presume to question his justice or goodness. He makes you miserable that the rest of your brethren may be more happy—His steady ‘ fixed purpose,’ is to ‘ seek the greatest good of his whole family.’ Your kind father therefore does not delight in your misery, although he *made a decree* before you were born, that you should never obey him, and that your present misery should be a consequence of that disobedience, which you could not avoid. To obtain an end so benevolent as the ‘ greatest sum of good’ to his whole family, you yourselves, on second thoughts, must acknowledge is worthy of so holy a man as is your father, notwithstanding the apparent defeatment of the end, in the complete misery of one half of his children. Moreover, your brethren could not be so happy as they are, unless they beheld your father’s displeasure in your confinement in torments.” Now the only difference between this father, and *your* deity is, that the latter has unlimited power and authority, and therefore can and will inflict *everlasting* tor-

ments upon the reprobated crew, who, according to your statement, are made *bad*, to obtain *good*, and made *miserable*, to obtain *happiness* for the *elect*.

15. In congruity with your system therefore, you never can make it appear that God seeks or obtains “the greatest good of the universe.” The atonement you admit is full and sufficient for all the human race; and therefore there is no deficiency, but goodness to give, and power to apply the merits of Christ’s death, in order to make all eternally happy. The same power and goodness manifested to the *reprobate*, which you say is exerted towards the *elect*, would as effectually change their hearts, and make them holy and happy. For, according to your doctrine, the elect are *totally depraved*, “up to the moment of regeneration,” and of course they take no active part in their conversion. And the reprobates cannot be *more* than *totally* depraved; so that the same grace and power which was required to change the heart of the elect, would also change the nature of the reprobate. It therefore follows that, on your principle, if all are not good and happy, it is either because God cannot, or because he will not make them so; and either supposition impeaches the power and goodness of God. Your *summum bonum* argument therefore, respecting the “greatest good of the universe,” deduced from the doctrine of foreordination, is fallacious.

16. This argument cannot be justly retorted upon us, because the scriptural doctrine which we plead

for, not only recognizes the *power* and *grace* of God in the conversion of sinners, but also his wisdom, justice, and holiness, which lead him to treat mankind as free, moral agents. Men are in a state of probation, life and death are set before them, and they are invited, though not compelled, *to choose life, that they may live*. We do not believe that God foreordained that man should fall, and then left him to himself, and to the subtilty of the devil, that the decree might take effect. This doctrine we abhor, because it contradicts scripture, violates reason, is contrary to common sense, and above all, reflects the greatest dishonour upon the resplendent attributes of Jehovah. If man were made free, to stand or fall, in his pristine state, he then unnecessarily brought misery upon himself. And if, after this, God has provided a sovereign remedy for Adam and all his posterity, which a part of them wilfully reject, it is just and good, wise and holy, that they should be condemned for their obstinate refusal. In this "scheme," we see that the greatest good is obtained to all the human family; because such is the wilful and rebellious conduct of sinners, that they will not have any more. But according to the doctrine of eternal decrees, the *elect* as obstinately refuse the offers of grace, as the reprobate, until they are overcome by omnipotent power; and could not this same omnipotent power, and *irresistible grace* overcome and conquer the reprobate? On your principle there would be no more justice, goodness, and power, in one case,

than in the other ; for your doctrine asserts, The price is paid for all, the reprobate and the elect— They all equally refuse to accept of mercy, until God, by an act of *sovereign grace*, and *almighty power*, conquers the elect. Can you assign any satisfactory reason, upon your principle, why the reprobate is not conquered also ? You say, I suppose, “ Yes, because God has determined not to do so.” But why has he so determined ? Do you answer, as the disputant on the Hopkinsian “ side” did ? *because he would*. But is this answer sufficient to satisfy a serious inquirer, who wishes to know the truth ? I repeat therefore my observation, that, taking your notion of decrees for our guidé, the “ greatest good of the universe” is not obtained.— The *end* therefore, which you propose to your system, being defeated by the system itself, it is on that account erroneous.

17. In p. 20, 21, you say, That it is “ suitable” God should not be pleased with part of his work, viewed separately, and yet is “ infinitely delighted with his system, considered as *a complete whole*.” Do not all the parts go to make up the *whole* ? and are not all the parts necessary for the perfection of the whole ? Do you not moreover say, that every part is included in the “ perfect plan,” and all according to the counsel of his will ? Is he then displeased with those parts which are necessary to make the other parts perfect and complete ? What particular part of *his system* is the Almighty displeased with ? Not with sin, surely. For, accord-

ing to Dr. Hopkins, whom, it seems, you do not like to contradict, *sin* is the cause of the greatest good. And certainly you cannot suppose that he is displeased with that which is the cause of the “greatest good of the universe.” If he be not displeased with sin, is it holiness he is displeased with? It would seem, according to your system, that he is not pleased to see holiness in the hearts of his rational creatures in this life, for you plead hard for the necessary continuance of “indwelling sin” during the term of life. It is somewhat curious that you should assert, that all the parts of the plan of Hopkinsianism are just as God would have them, perfectly according to the counsel of his will, and yet that there are some parts with which he is not pleased. It would seem from what you have said, that God cannot satisfy himself with his own works. And why not? Because he lacks wisdom? or power? But the building you have described was never erected by the divine architect. *His* system is perfect, when it is viewed in the aggregate, or by parts, all being according to his mind and pleasure—and therefore he saith, *My counsel shall stand; I will do all my pleasure.* But *your* system cannot hang together, because the different parts oppose each other—they cannot harmoniously unite, because it was never *designed*, nor *wrought* by the Almighty, all of whose works are *perfect*. It carries too distinctive marks of *human weakness*, to be of eternal *origin*, or of eternal duration. Old *Calvinism*, you have tried to patch up with *Hopkinsian-*

ism, but it is like putting new cloth to an old garment, the rent is only made worse.

That we may be led into all *truth*, and exhibit in our lives a practical comment upon the pure and consistent doctrines of Jesus Christ, is Sir, the sincere prayer of your obedient servant for Christ's sake.

N. BANGS.

REV. S. WILLISTON, *Durham, N. Y.*

Rhinebeck, March 30th, 1815.



LETTER II.

ON TOTAL DEPRAVITY.

Rev. Sir,

IF your “foundation work” be laid *in the sand* of error, as I think it is, the superstructure which you have erected thereon, may be removed with greater facility.

I. 1. The first thing noticeable in your second sermon is, the misstatement of the question which was debated. You say, p. 29, “It was the second question in the debate, Whether men, in their natural state, previous to regeneration, are totally sinful or depraved.” This, I believe, is erroneous.—If I am not greatly mistaken, the question stood thus—*Is man totally depraved until he is justified?*

2. Although I might object to the word *total*, when applied to man in a state of *initial salvation*, yet when he is considered abstract from all the provisions and benefits of redemption, none hold to human depravity stronger than we do. And if men be viewed merely in a state of nature, or “in their natural state,” as you have expressed it, they are unquestionably totally depraved. But this is not the question in debate, whether men are totally

depraved in “ their natural state, previous to regeneration ;” but whether any one, previous to actual sin, may be considered as wholly destitute of the benefits of redemption ; and whether, they remain *totally* depraved until justified.

Taking the negative side of the question, I plead that there is a quickening power of divine grace, by which the sinner is awakened, his heart softened, and by which he is brought to see and feel the necessity of *repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, before* he is justified. Any candid person therefore, may see that your manner of stating the question, gives the reader an erroneous idea of the controversy, and also represents our doctrine in a different light from what a *fair* statement would.

If you should say it makes no difference, I think the following remarks will convince you to the contrary. You affirm the public debate at *Durham* was mutually agreed upon two months previous to its commencement. Well then, says Mr. Benedict, the length of time from such agreement, remained precisely two months, *until* it actually took place. I say no ; the *time* when the agreement was made, was, it is true, two months previous to its commencement ; but the time *shortened* continually *until* the 2nd day of May, 1810. You say man is totally depraved previous to regeneration. To this I agree, if men be viewed merely in a state of nature, and *totally* destitute of all the benefits of Christ’s death and resurrection. It follows, then,

says Mr. B. he is *totally* depraved until he is justified. I say no, for there are many visitations of *grace* previous to justification. By justification is understood, *a free pardon of all actual sin, and a restoration to the favour of God.*

If, however, you contend that the question is, as you have stated, whether or not man be totally depraved before regeneration, I drop the above distinction, provided you receive my definition of the word *total depravity*. *Total* comes from *totalis*, which signifies *whole, entire*; and of course *totally*, signifies, as saith Johnson, *wholly, fully, completely*. *Depravity*, according to the same lexicographer, signifies a *vitiated state*. Accordingly, to be totally depraved, is to be *totally, entirely and completely vitiated by sin*—that is, all the powers of soul and body are fully under the influence, control and dominion of sin. Consequently the understanding is darkened, the will perverted, so that a totally depraved sinner has no understanding of the ways of God, nor no desire nor inclination to do his will. This I grant was the state of Adam after his apostacy, and before the promise of a Saviour was made. It may, for aught I know, be the state of infants at the moment of their birth. But so certain as Jesus Christ bore the penalty of the Adamic law, so certain it is that all are born into the world under the privileges of the new covenant of redemption; and therefore none now, are in the same state that Adam was, previous to the grand promise of redemption. Take the following illustration of this subject. Sup-

pose a politician enumerating the high privileges of an American citizen. He contrasts his present state, with what it was while under the British government. To make us the more sensible of our distinguished blessings, he would rehearse the many disadvantages of our former condition, comparing them with our present advantages. Such, says he, *you were*, but so and so *you are*. *You are not now* what you once *were*. So when mankind are viewed in their relation to the covenant of works, under which Adam was placed, and as being involved with him in his sin, they were, according to their then mode of existence, participators with him in his totally depraved state. But in consequence of the new covenant of redemption, which comprehended all mankind, Adam, and all his posterity were emancipated from the peculiar rigor of the old covenant, and brought under the gracious dispensation of grace. Its immunities and privileges are extended to every child of man. The true light every where shines—*grace* is given. And none are *totally, entirely*, and completely vitiated by sin, but those who wilfully sin against the provisions of this gracious covenant until they are given over to a hard heart and a reprobate mind.

3. We are willing to admit the definition of human depravity, which you have given in page 31, that it “means the sinful, corrupt nature which we bring into the world with us ;” and also in page 32, “that the *heart* is wholly and continually under the power of sin.” We fully believe that all which is

merely natural, is sinful: or, in other words, that there is no *moral good* in us until the Lord puts it there by his Spirit. But you are not to conclude that this is a point conceded by us to the Calvinists, for it is a doctrine we never denied. Neither are we indebted to your system for it; because it is found in the scriptures,—and no men ever taught it more fully and scripturally, and advocated it more masterly, than those eminent and evangelical ministers of Christ, Messrs. *John Wesley* and *John Fletcher*. It is necessary to attend to this remark, because it is *sometimes* the case, when Calvinists hear us preach this doctrine, and other doctrines of the gospel connected with it, to say we preach Calvinism. Those who do this, arrogate to themselves the exclusive privilege of revealing and advocating the most important doctrines of the gospel, as if the church never knew them, until they made them manifest.

4. The point in debate then is, not whether men are totally depraved, when they come into the world, and while destitute of all the benefits of Christ, but whether they *remain so until* they are justified, pardoned, or *accepted in the beloved*; for I understand these terms synonymously. I also take it for granted, that a man *totally* depraved, according to your definition of it in page 33, has no grace, no spiritual light, and of course he has no spiritual discernment, cannot repent, nor believe in Christ.—And you contend that they remain so, “up to the moment of regeneration.” p. 39. If I comprehend

your meaning, by regeneration you mean, the same as justification or pardon of sin. Understanding the term, regeneration, in this sense, we, on the contrary, maintain, that previous to justification a sinner is enlightened, convicted, and is heartily sorry for sin. St. Paul saith, Eph. iv. 13. *Whatsoever doth make manifest is light*—and Christ said, John iii. 19. *This is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.* And in verse 9, *That is the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.* Now let the medium of light be what it may, whether doctrine preached, read, or the invisible operation of the Holy Spirit upon the mind, it is evident the sinner has light, *before* he is justified; unless you can make it appear that all who are born into the world are justified. Indeed, if I understand your meaning upon this subject, (which I confess is somewhat difficult,) you make the first dawn of spiritual light upon the human heart, to be regeneration; or the first act of divine grace upon the soul, regeneration. This, I think, must be your meaning, because you make repentance and faith *subsequent* to justification, and not *antecedent* to it, p. 42. This being the case, you are reduced to the necessity of admitting that all those who are enlightened by the Spirit of God, are regenerated.*

* That the reader may be convinced I do not misrepresent Mr. Williston in regard to this particular, I will quote his words:—"The truth is, that in an unsanctified heart,

And St. Paul saith, Titus ii. 11. *For the grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men ; v. 12. Teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.* Here it is explicitly stated that the grace which brings salvation, hath appeared to *all men* ; and that it is the grace which teaches us to deny ungodliness, &c. Now if this saving grace, which hath appeared unto *all men*, and that true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world, in its first operation upon the human soul, produces regeneration, it follows by fair consequence, that all are regenerated. But all men are *not* regenerated, although, according to the plainest testimony of scripture, all are enlight-

there is not the least degree of that holy love, or that holy repentance or that holy faith, or any other holy affection, to which the most holy God has designed to make the promise of his favour," p. 42. If I rightly comprehend his meaning in this passage, he means to say that the promise of pardon is not made to any unsanctified person ; that is, in plain English, a sinner must first be pardoned, before a promise of pardon is made to him ! If he had said that a promise of eternal life in the world to come, is not made to any but sanctified Christians, he would have spoken scripturally : but to assert that the favour of pardon is not promised to any but those who are sanctified, not only involves the contradiction above mentioned, but is expressly contradictory to scripture, Isa. lv. 7. " Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts ; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him ; and to our God, for he will *abundantly pardon.*" In these words the promise of pardon is made to the wicked, on condition of their returning to God.

ened. If then all are enlightened, and yet all are not regenerated, then sinners are enlightened *before* they are justified.

5. In the parable respecting the sower, recorded Luke viii. 4—8. it is said of some, namely, those by the way side, (v. 12.) that they received the word (of God, v. 11.) and that it was taken out of their hearts. Was this word good? You dare not say no. Well, according to our Saviour's own interpretation of this parable, this part of it was designed to represent those persons who received the word of God into their hearts, and others received it with joy, ver. 13. Were those persons regenerated? If you say yes, then you acknowledge the possibility of falling from grace. If you say no, you give up the point; and acknowledge there may be some *good*, even the *good word of God* in the heart, previous to regeneration.

6. So also the parable of the ten virgins, five of whom were *wise*, and five of whom were *foolish*, Math. xxv. 2—10. When at midnight it was proclaimed, v. 6. *Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him*, it is added, v. 7. *Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps*, v. 8. *And the foolish said unto the wise, give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out*. But their lamps must have been lighted, otherwise they could not have been extinguished.

Were those foolish (improvident) virgins designed to represent the justified? I think not. But if they were, then such may so fall from grace as to

be shut out of heaven, v. 10. If they were not, then sinners may have *light before* they are justified. This conclusion you may attempt to evade, by saying a man may have *light*, and yet be totally depraved. But is it not the same, to say a man is totally sinful, as to say he is totally *dark*? You have already answered this question in the affirmative; for in page 40, you say regeneration is “being called out of *darkness* into *marvellous light*.”

7. Once more—In Heb. vi. 4. it is said, *For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, &c.* Do you suppose these words describe a justified person? I do not—although I believe the particulars mentioned in the subsequent part of the verse, and in verse 5, are designed to characterize a regenerated man. But Calvinistic writers will not allow even this. If, however, a person is *enlightened*, and not justified, then a person is *enlightened previous* to justification; and therefore a person is not in *total darkness*, nor, consequently *totally depraved*, until he is justified.

8. Again, Acts xxvi. 18. *To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, &c.* In this text there are three particulars mentioned *previous* to their receiving forgiveness of sins. 1. Their eyes are opened.—Here is one remove, or “degree” from total blindness, or total depravity. 2. To turn them from darkness to light. Here is a second remove, or “degree” from *total* blindness, a remove also from

darkness. 3. From the power of Satan to God.— Here is a third remove from *total* blindness, a remove from Satan to God. And 4th. The *end* for which this is done, *that they may receive forgiveness of sins.* But sins are not forgiven, until the sinner is justified. It follows therefore that the sinner has his eyes *opened*, has *light*, and is delivered from the power of Satan, *before* he is justified. He is not then *totally blind*, *totally dark*, and *totally* under the *power of Satan*, until justified.

9. That a sinner is convicted and heartily sorry for sin previous to justification, is abundantly manifest from scripture. Isaiah vi. 5. *Then said I, Woe is me ! for I am undone ; because I am a man of unclean lips, &c.* This humiliating confession of his sinfulness, certainly must have arisen, from a penetrating sense of his vileness. And that it preceded his forgiveness, or justification, is manifest from ver. 7, where he says, *his iniquity was taken away, and his sins purged.* So also when the prophet Nathan had *convicted* David of his sinful conduct in the affair of Uriah, David said, with *penitential sorrow*, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin, 2 Sam. xii. 13. If this confession of David was *sincere*, it was also *heartly* ; and it arose from the conviction of truth which Nathan addressed to his conscience ; and the confession *preceded* the pardon. Notice also the case of *Saul of Tarsus*, recorded Acts ix. He was first convinced by a light from heaven, ver. 3. And then, *Trembling and as-*

tonished, said, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* This trembling and astonishment arose from the reproving words of the Lord Jesus, *I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.* But all this while, Paul was not justified, as is evident from what is related in ver. 17, 18; where, after Ananias delivered his message to him, it is said, *there fell from his eyes, as it had been scales; and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.* Those persons were, no doubt, exercised by that godly sorrow, *which worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of,* and which always precedes the witness of our justification in the sight of God. Now if a godly sorrow for sin *worketh* repentance, then it must precede repentance, and repentance precedes justification.

10. That a sinner must repent before he is justified, is equally evident from scripture. It was the doctrine preached by *John the Baptist*, Matt. iii. 2. *Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* It was the first doctrine preached by our Lord, when he returned from his successful combat with satan in the wilderness, *Repent ye, and believe the gospel,* Mark. i. 15. It was also the first thing addressed to the people, on the day of *Pentecost*, *Repent ye, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins,* Acts ii. 38.—When a sinner is justified, his sins are forgiven. But in the above text, the apostle Peter, exhorts them to repent, for, or in order, to the remission of sins. So also Acts iii. 19, *Repent, ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, &c.* In

these words, repentance is pressed upon the hearers from the same consideration as in the former case, namely, *That their sins may be blotted out.*—And, certainly, justification, which supposes an acquittal from guilt, is synonymous with blotting out sins. Inasmuch therefore, as repentance *precedes* the blotting out of sins, a sinner must repent *before* he is justified. Now it is presumed that no man will repent until he sees, and feels its necessity—and a sinner cannot see its necessity until enlightened by the Spirit of truth. That he may have this sight of his vileness and misery, he must have that light which makes manifest the hidden things of darkness; for no man *can* repent without divine aid, as Christ saith, *without me ye can do nothing.*—And inasmuch as a sinner repents before he is justified, and yet, *cannot* repent without divine grace, to “prevent,” to quicken and influence him, it follows, that he has a measure of that true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world, and of that grace which brings salvation, previous to justification. But a man *totally* depraved, has no such light, nor no such grace; and therefore, he is not totally graceless, or depraved, *until* justified.

11. If you affirm, as some have done, that a sinner *can* repent and love God without divine grace; we must be permitted, until evidence is produced to support it, to deny such an unscriptural and unreasonable assertion. Some, perhaps, have been led into this error, from confounding the foundation of our obligation to God, with the means of fulfilling

it. The *foundation* of our obligation, is the relation in which we stand to God as his creatures—but he never can, consistently with his nature as a just and benevolent being, require the fulfilment of this obligation without affording all proper assistance. Moreover, it is utterly impossible, in the nature of things, to require us to see without light, to hear without sound, or to love without grace. The impossibility arises from this consideration, that Christ, the true light, has come, the Spirit of truth is sent into the world, and the warning, inviting voice of God is gone forth into all the world. This being the case, you might, with equal propriety, say, that a man sees under the meridian sun, without the aid of its enlightening rays, as to say, that a sinner, under the blazing light of the gospel, can have spiritual discernment without spiritual light—and you might also as well assert, that a man can eat and be satisfied without food, as to say, that a sinner can love God without the love of God. It is true, God requires every man to love him with all his heart; and this requirement is just and good; but a sinner can never comply with it before he repents, and he cannot repent, nor believe in the Lord Jesus Christ without grace. The grace of repentance and faith being given, and being used, on our part, the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost. Then, if we continue to walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.

Now the obligation to love God with all the heart is fulfilled.

12. The parable of the prodigal son recorded Luke xv. is both a proof and an illustration of the subject under consideration, i. e. that a sinner is convinced of sin, that he manifests his sorrow by confession, before he is restored to divine favour. In the first place, he came *to himself*—here was conviction, after a long night of insensibility. 2. He remembered the wealth and benevolence of his Father. Here is a lively representation of the recollection of the exuberant goodness of God, which the sinner had abused. 3. He resolved to return with this humiliating confession, *Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight*. This is the language of an awakened penitent sinner, exercised with that godly sorrow, which worketh repentance unto salvation. 4. Then the Father is represented as beholding him while yet afar off, as meeting him, and falling upon his neck and kissing him; all which is emblematical of the sense of reconciliation which results from the witness of pardoning love. Now I ask, is not a sinner better, even in the temper of his mind, while making this humble confession of sin, and while returning to God in the act of sincere repentance, than he is, while wallowing in the swinish pleasures of sensuality, and wandering afar off in the strange country of iniquity? To say that all this is *subsequent* to justification, is totally to subvert the order of things. It is assuming a ground utterly untenable, as will be shown in the sequel.—

The case of the publican is also directly in point.—*After* he made his confession, with humble contrition of soul, it is said, *He went down to his house justified rather than the other.* What makes the marked difference between this man and the pharisee? If he was no *better*, while in the penitent posture of confession, than the pharisee while he exulted in the pride of his own righteousness, why is he commended by the Lord Jesus, on this very account? Persons in this penitent state are unquestionably in a more hopeful way, than those who are hardening themselves in iniquity.

Neither is there any necessity to quiet his conscience, by telling him to rest here, as if the work of his salvation were done. Indeed, were we to teach, that regeneration is the first work of grace upon the soul, and that, when a soul is once justified, he cannot go back and finally perish, there would be the greatest danger of deception imaginable. Is it not encouraging to a penitent sinner, to be informed while under the painful exercise of repentance, and struggling against the strong tide of native impurity, that these are sure indications of a gracious work begun in his heart; and that, if he despair not, the Lord Jesus will appear to his deliverance? It is true it is all of grace. It being from unmerited favour that he is awakened, and enabled to repent—and this grace of repentance and faith precedes the grace of justification, as much as dawn of day precedes full day-light. There is first the blade, then the ear, *after* that the full corn in the

ear, Mark. iv. 28. The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened, Matth. xiii. 33. Do not these metaphorical representations denote a gradual work upon the heart previous to justification? If so, as they certainly do, then a man is not *totally* depraved *until* justified.

13. But faith in the Lord Jesus is required in order to justification; and therefore *believing* must *precede* justification. *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ*, Rom. v. 1. In this text *faith* is considered the (instrumental) cause of our justification, and *peace* the effect. Justification itself is an act of God—*It is God that justifieth*. And is it not impossible in the nature of things for an *effect* to *precede* its *cause*? Most certainly. It follows therefore that *believing* in the Lord Jesus with *an heart unto righteousness*, is antecedent to regeneration.—It is so declared to be in the most explicit manner, by inspiration itself. *After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise*, Eph. i. 13. Here the seal of pardon is said to be given *after believing*. Can a sinner believe to the salvation of his soul, without the aid of divine grace? It is certainly impossible. And therefore a penitent sinner has grace before he is justified; and consequently he is not *totally* sinful *until* justified.

14. If you still contend that regeneration is effected in the human heart previous to repentance and faith, then you must take the following conse-

quences along with you—That a sinner is justified in impenitence and in infidelity—and then you have an *impenitent, unbelieving believer, an holy, impenitent saint, a justified unbeliever!* Whereas Christ saith, *He that believeth not shall be damned.* If a sinner may be justified in unbelief, he may, according to that declaration of the Lord Jesus, be in a state of justification and condemnation at the same time, i. e. he may *be* justified, and *not* justified at the same time: the Lord Jesus also saith, *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;* therefore if a sinner is justified *before* he repents, he may be in danger of perishing while in a state of justification. Such are the absurd consequences resulting from your unscriptural notion of total depravity. Moreover, if regeneration be effected by the first act of divine grace upon his heart, he is no more a free agent in the work of his regeneration, than he was in his creation—and therefore the objection which you state, and endeavour to obviate, that your doctrine annihilates the moral agency of man, and consequently his responsibility, remains in all its force. Not that it lies against the doctrine of human depravity scripturally explained, and understood; but against your notion of regeneration, which you think originates from your doctrine of total depravity.

We freely grant, that the sinner does not take one step towards salvation, until divine grace moves him thereto, by enlightening his understanding, and by influencing his will; but we also contend, that after

his understanding is thus enlightened, and his will influenced, he may, and often does, resist its operations, agreeably to the pointed saying of Stephen to the stubborn Jews,—*Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost ; as your fathers did, so do ye.* From the preceding arguments it appears plain, that a sinner has grace to enlighten his understanding, to awaken him to a sense of his sinfulness, to work in him a godly sorrow for sin, to enable him to repent of it, and to enable him to believe in Jesus Christ, *before* he is justified---and this is the point contended for in the debate.

II. 1. It is unnecessary to make any remarks upon the texts of scripture you have quoted, to prove that mankind are depraved previous to regeneration, because this is a truth we never denied. And as to their proving that they remain so until they are justified, they are all foreign to the point. But I cannot avoid noticing your remarks upon Rom. v. 18, page 42. *Even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift is come upon all men unto justification of life.* After some remarks which do not touch the question in debate, you observe, “ Perhaps all men in this verse, means all those of whom the apostle had spoken in the preceding verse, which *receive* abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, who shall reign in life.” You seem to express yourself, as though you were doubtful of your own interpretation. And indeed how any man could give such an one with the Bible before him,

would be unaccountable, did we not know the powerful influence of prejudice. To favour your “perhaps” explanation, you have left out the counter part of the text, *Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all unto condemnation.*

If the *all* in the latter clause of the text be restricted to those who receive abundance of grace, then the *all* in the former clause must be limited to them also. By this absurd interpretation you exempt the *reprobates* from condemnation, and fix it on the *elect* only ; for it is presumed you will not assert that the reprobates have received abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness. It is too evident to be successfully controverted, from the reasoning of the apostle in these passages, he inferred, that the free gift came upon just so many, as did the condemnation. If then all were condemned in Adam, all were justified by Christ. You are mistaken also in supposing this text is cited to disprove human depravity, according to the explanation you have given of it, and which we admit, (*viz.*) *That corrupt nature which we bring into the world :* but it is brought to prove a point which you have not had the boldness to deny in your book, namely, that infants are not condemned merely on account of Adam’s sin, but that they, in consequence of the obedience of Christ unto death, are justified—but why ? because they are born into the world holy ? No ; but because Christ has freed them from the penalty of the Adamic law, by bearing that

penalty in their stead. True, they inherit a corrupt and depraved nature from Adam; but this is not so imputed to them, as to constitute them *guilty*, and condemnable. According to your doctrine, however, the infant of a day old is equally involved in guilt and condemnation, with the *sinner an hundred years old*. This horrid idea has become so odious in the eye of justice and goodness, and so abhorrent to the feelings of humanity, that you have thought proper to keep it out of sight in your crippled defence of irrelative decrees, and your unscriptural doctrine of total depravity.

2. You go on: "But this would not disprove the total depravity of those who are out of Christ."—This is a very vague sentence. From it your readers might infer, that we undertook to prove, that all those out of Christ, even devils, and those sinners who have reprobated themselves by a long abuse of divine grace, are not totally depraved.—Indeed, the principal part of your sermon on total depravity, is entirely foreign to the point. For we know that mankind are wicked enough, and that their depravity is sufficiently manifest in their determined opposition to God. But it is also certain that their quantum of depravity is accumulated in consequence of their wilful abuse of the mercies of God.

3. You seem to suppose that, because regeneration is a radical change, a sinner must remain totally depraved, "up to the moment of his regeneration." And yet in page 50, you admit that, "by

awakening and conviction, things are preparing in divine providence, for him to see himself entirely sinful and ill-deserving." Pray sir, what things are preparing? Is the Lord now only preparing the atonement, or the work of redemption? Is it the *foundation* of his justification which is now adjusting? Or is it the illumination of the Spirit upon his mind? It is presumed you will not say that God is now laying the foundation, *for other foundation can no man lay than that which is (already) laid*. As to *redemption* and the *atonement*, the first you think was made in eternity between the Father and Son; and the latter you will not deny was completed, at least before the day of Pentecost. And as to the illumination of the Spirit upon the heart, so far as it has any thing to do with the point in debate, your whole sermon is an unavailing effort to prove there is no such thing, previous to justification.—How then, conformably to your sentiment, can things be preparing by "awakening and conviction" before justification? To be totally depraved is to be *totally blind*; and you assert that a sinner remains in this melancholy state *until* justified; but here you assert he is awakened" to see himself entirely sinful," &c. Can a man *totally blind* see himself? The blazing light of truth will lead you sometimes to contradict your errors. O that it might carry such light into the darkened corners of your babel of confusion, as to exhibit its native deformity to your pious soul. For it is possible, I believe, for a man to have some piety, although surrounded with

many errors. Do not, dear sir, think me too charitable—you have set the example. For, if I mistake not, you think a man may be as pious as was the apostle Paul, and yet be *totally sinful*. The explanation of your text leads me to this conclusion. You hold he was regenerated when he wrote his admirable epistle to the Romans ; and yet you think he taught the doctrine of total depravity in your text, *I know that in me, (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing*, Rom. vii. 18. This, you suppose he spoke of himself, as his then present state, and therefore, he must have been at that time both totally depraved, and regenerated !

4. But, sir, in page 53, you make a more explicit concession in favour of the truth contended for in these sheets. There you assert, that, “ A *knowledge* of this (namely, our depravity) is forced upon us in that *conviction* which *precedes* a change of heart.” I have put the words, “ knowledge,” “ conviction,” and “ precedes” in italics, that the reader’s attention might be arrested in its progress, to note the pointed manner in which you contradict yourself ; for in page 39, you assert that sinners remain *totally depraved* even up to the moment of their regeneration ; yet here in page 53, you affirm that a knowledge of this depravity is forced upon us in that conviction which precedes a change of heart. Here you give up the point for which I contend. It is not however, supposed you designed to do so. But a ray of truth providentially intercepted the mists of error, which your heterogenous system

raised about your soul, and your pen in a happy moment recorded it. You will not, I think, contend that a sinner has a knowledge of himself, has a conviction of his depravity and sinfulness, without the illumination of the word or Spirit of truth. If you do, you thereby supercede the necessity of the gospel word, and set aside also the necessity of the Holy Spirit, which, according to the declaration of the Lord Jesus, is sent to reprove, or convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and judgment, John xvi. 7, 13.

5. These arguments you may attempt to evade, by saying that a man may have the grace of conviction, and of self-knowledge, and yet be totally depraved. It is granted that a man's having spiritual light and knowledge, does not disprove that he *was* totally depraved, nor that there is much depravity yet remaining; but it undoubtedly proves, according to your own definition of it, that he is not *totally* so, when he has such light and knowledge. The apostle Paul, speaking of the depraved state in which the Ephesians formerly were, says, *Ye were sometimes darkness*. If then a man can be *totally* depraved, while illuminated by the Spirit of truth, he may then be *in total darkness*, while blessed with the light of truth, i. e. in *total* darkness, and not in total darkness at the same time! A man *totally* depraved is *totally* blind. And if a man *totally blind*, can nevertheless see himself, he can see without any medium of vision, i. e. he can see and not see at the same time, which is a contradiction! By admitting

therefore, that a man is convicted so as to see himself, before he is regenerated, you give up your doctrine, and acknowledge that a sinner is not totally depraved *until* justified.

6. To show the inconsistency of your doctrine on this subject, in a still plainer point of light, I shall examine your text, in connexion with your comment. You have repeatedly asserted, and in this respect we agree with you, that the new birth is a “radical change;” and you also contend that in the 7th of Romans, out of which your text is chosen, the apostle relates his then present experience and exercise as a christian, after having experienced this “radical change.” The word *radical* come from *radix*, root. A *radical change*, therefore, signifies a change at the *root*, *heart*, or seat (according to Dr. *Watts*) of the affections. This radical change, therefore, must signify a *thorough renovation* of the root, or heart of man. What do you mean by total depravity? Answer, p. 32. “But by total depravity is meant that the *heart* is wholly and continually under the power of sin—that every desire or thought of the *heart* is wrong—that there is no *heartly* obedience rendered to the law of God—that the *heart* is directly the reverse of what it should be.” This doctrine of total and universal depravity you think is contained in your text, which Paul applied to himself in his converted state.—What was Paul’s state when he wrote his epistle to the Romans? Answer, p. 30, “Before this,” (before he wrote this epistle) “he had been effectually

called into the fellowship of the gospel, and made a partaker of the divine nature." This we fully believe ; but we do not believe that in the 7th of Romans, he designed to describe the experience of a christian brought into the liberties of God's children ; which I hope will appear evident, when we come to consider the doctrine of christian perfection. But after making this assertion, how can you consistently, represent him as affirming, that he was at the same time *totally* sinful ! Is there no difference between the "fellowship of the gospel," and having the "divine nature," and the being "wholly and continually under the power of sin ?" Again, p. 30, "But it was not strictly, and in every sense, true, that Paul had no good thing in him, at the time he wrote this epistle." How then can you suppose that he declared himself totally depraved in your sense of the word, "when he wrote this epistle."—If he had some "good thing" in him, his heart could not have been "directly the reverse of what it should be." Let your doctrine therefore be true or false, it is not, according to your own assertions, contained in your text. Understand me right—I do not deny that human depravity is expressed in the text ; but only, according to your view of the subject, it cannot be ; because you assert that Paul was then speaking of his own spiritual state, as an experimental christian. According to this representation of the subject, Paul was a *totally depraved christian !* in *total darkness*, although in possession of the *light of the gospel*—having his

heart full of sin, and yet enjoying, at least, “some holiness.” For as strenuously as you plead for *indwelling sin* in your fourth sermon, you are constrained to acknowledge, that when Paul wrote his epistle to the Romans, he had “some holiness.”—“But by total depravity is meant that the heart is wholly and continually under the power of sin.”—And was Paul’s heart “*wholly and continually* under the power of sin,” when he wrote his epistle to the Romans. If the verse you have chosen for your text, expressed his then present state, as you suppose it did, and if you have hit the genuine meaning of it, he certainly was continually under the power of sin, not only at that time, but also all the days of his life—and yet, if we may credit you in another place, he was at the *same time* “brought into fellowship of the gospel,” and had the “divine nature.” Will you be so kind as to inform the world in what part of Paul’s heart the “divine nature” was, while his heart was *wholly and continually* under the power of sin—how much “holy affection” he had while his heart was “directly the reverse of what it should be,”—how much *hearty* obedience he paid to God, while he “rendered no *hearty* obedience?” When you have *fairly* solved these difficulties, and reconciled those palpable contradictions, you will convince the world that Hopkinsianism is consistent with scripture and reason. Such being the absurd consequences flowing from your ideas of total depravity, they cannot be founded in truth.

7. If the reader wishes to know our ideas upon depravity, I will try to satisfy him in a few words. We believe that when Adam transgressed the law of God, he thereby lost, not only the image of God, in which he was created, but also all ability to obey and love God. With Mr. Williston, we believe, apostate Adam begat a son in his own fallen, depraved likeness; and that all who are born into the world possess nothing morally good which they inherited from their ancestors. But we likewise believe that when God made the promise of a Saviour to Adam, he restored to him spiritual light, with power to repent, and return by faith in the promise, to his offended Maker. We furthermore believe, that on account of Jesus Christ, sufficient light, grace, and ability is given to every man, at some period of his life, to enable him to repent and believe in Jesus Christ, (if he live under the light of the gospel) to the salvation of his soul: and that through the atoning merits of the Lord Jesus, the guilt of Adam's sin is not so imputed to his posterity, that any of them shall be finally and eternally miserable, *merely* because Adam sinned. *Ye shall no longer use this proverb in Israel, the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge; but the soul that sinneth, it shall die.* When the covenant of grace is taken into consideration, and mankind are viewed in relation to it, we conclude none are condemned under it, but those who sin against its provisions, and regulations. But infants are not capable of sinning antecedent to all knowledge

of good and evil; and therefore they are not, nor cannot be, consistently with justice and mercy, condemned on account of Adam's sin.* Sinners coming into the world under the light of the gospel, living in neglect of its requirements, and thereby hardening their hearts against the convictions of truth and love, finally become so *totally* hard, that they are beyond the reach of mercy. Here again is *total* depravity. Such are given over to a hard heart and a reprobate mind. Having filled up the measure of their iniquities, they are justly condemned of God; because when he called they refused to answer.

8. Adam being the representative of all mankind, and the *stamina* of all the human race, all were, according to their then mode of existence, involved in his condemnation. And as Christ was promised to Adam, who was our representative, all who were then in his loins, were included in his reprieve and justification. All are born into the world under the distinguished privileges of the covenant of grace. Not that we inherit a sanctified nature by natural genera-

* That the above observations give an impartial view of our doctrine on this subject, will be seen by the following quotation from our *Discipline*, published in 1808. p. 74. "We believe, that in the moment Adam fell, he had no freedom of will left; but that God, when, of his own free grace, he gave the promise of a Saviour to him and his posterity, graciously restored to mankind a liberty and power to accept of proffered salvation. And in all this, man's boasting is excluded; the whole of that which is good in him, even from the first moment of his fall, being of grace and not of nature."

tion. On the contrary, this nature is corrupt and sinful ; and when viewed in relation to the Adamic law, deserves the wrath of God ; but when man is viewed in relation to the covenant of grace, which was ratified by Jesus Christ, we see how those who have not actually sinned may be justified unto life, and being sanctified by the blood of the covenant, are qualified for eternal glory. This appears to us the scriptural representation of human depravity. That we may so believe in Jesus Christ, as to be delivered from the curse of the law, and be justified unto life, is, dear sir, the prayer of yours, &c.

N. BANGS.

REV. S. WILLISTON, *Durham, N. Y.*

Rhinebeck, April 25th, 1815.

LETTER III.

ON ELECTION.

Rev. Sir,

1. 1. **O**N entering upon the doctrine of election, it is proper to notice the tendency of some of your remarks upon this important point. Your labouring to prove that election is not founded upon works foreseen, is calculated to impress the reader with an idea that we believe it is. This sentiment *you* know was not advocated in the debate; and you also know that the “disputant on the” Hopkinsian “side,” laboured to force me to assert and defend the doctrine, that election to eternal life depends on our works. His efforts, however, were unavailing. So far from believing this sentiment, we continually maintain that the election of souls to eternal life, is predicated of the goodness of God; and that, if it depended wholly upon works, no one would see life. It was pure love that moved God to give his Son, and that moved the Son to suffer and die for man. It is pure love that moves the Holy Trinity to begin, carry on, and perfect the work of salvation in the hearts of sinners. But such is the order of God, and the economy of grace, that this work

of salvation is not effected without the co-operation of the free volitions of man. *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* Neither are we justified here as penitent sinners by works, but by faith. *With the heart man believeth unto righteousness. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved.* Nor does it follow by consequence from our doctrine, that election to eternal life depends upon our works as its cause. It is true, we believe, from the undeviating testimony of scripture, that by the evidence of our good works, which are the fruits of justifying faith, we are justified in the sight of men here, and in the sight of God at the great day. *By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.* Was not Abraham our father justified by works? Seest thou how faith wrought together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect.

2. In order to shew the inconsistency of your scheme of election, it is necessary to attend to the general scope and design of the Apostle Paul, in writing his epistle to the Romans, out of which your text is taken. From a careful attention to the whole epistle, it appears to me to have been the principal design of the Apostle in that epistle, to prove, 1. That all men, Jews and Gentiles, were sinners, and therefore stood in need of forgiveness. 2. To convince them, from this consideration, of the necessity of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, to make it consistent with the character of God, and the nature

of his government, to pardon such sinners as were described. 3. To point out the method by which the benefits of Christ are applied, namely, by the Holy Ghost, through faith in the Lord Jesus. 4. To exemplify the exercise of a sinner while under a legal sentence of condemnation, and groaning for deliverance. This he illustrates in the seventh chapter, by introducing an account of his own experience, or by personating any man under the exercise of repentance. 5. To exhibit to both Jews and Gentiles, the superlative excellence of Christianity, in its effects upon the hearts and lives of believers. 6. His next principal design appears to have been to justify the ways of God in rejecting the Jews, and in receiving the Gentiles to be heirs of the heavenly inheritance. To this the Apostle anticipates the objections which a thinking Jew might make against his doctrine, in supposing that, if God rejected the Jews from being his people, he would suffer his faithfulness to fail. To obviate such objections, the Apostle proceeds to shew that God as a sovereign, elected the Jews to be his people, without any regard to their worthiness or merit; and that, inasmuch as they had long abused his clemency, he had a just right to cast them away, as a punishment for their many crimes. This proposition the Apostle proves, and illustrates in a variety of ways. In the ninth chapter especially, he introduces the matter in the most solemn and emphatical manner—In a manner which clearly evinces the ardour of his mind, and the burning love he

felt for his nation—In a manner also, which manifestly proves he did not believe in *your* doctrine of decrees and unconditional election. V. 1. *I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,* v. 2. *That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.* V. 3. *For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.* If the Apostle had been about to assert your doctrine, he never would have expressed himself in this manner. Can it be supposed that he felt such an *opposition* to the *eternal decree* of God, respecting the reprobation of the Jews, that he wished himself accursed from Christ, if he could thereby prevent its execution. He was now under the influence of the Spirit of God, and therefore spoke as moved by the Holy Ghost. But if the rejection of the Jews at the present time were an effect of an eternal and irresistible decree of God, without any regard to their wickedness foreseen, would it not have been the depth of duplicity to express such an anxious concern for their salvation? Allowing their reprobation to be an effect of their voluntary wickedness,* of their malicious hatred to the Lord Jesus, in addition to all their other crimes,

* If their wickedness was *voluntary*, it could have been *avoided*; and if it had been avoided, the conditional decree of reprobation would not have been executed upon them.—The condition of their reprobation was their various and aggravated crimes, which they might have avoided by receiving the Lord Jesus as their Messiah, and by acting accordingly.

Edward Griffith

and this tender concern for their misery, is perfectly consistent with the purest spirit of piety. You frequently tell the people that opposition to the decrees, is indicative of impiety. Do you think the Apostle was so totally depraved at this time also, that his “heart was directly the reverse of what it ought to be,” and therefore it rose in opposition to the decrees?

3. The Apostle proceeds to notice the sovereignty of God, in his choosing *Jacob* in preference to *Esau*, to be the progenitor of *Messiah*, of whom as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever more, verse 5. “For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son, verse 9. And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac, verse 10. (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works” [seeing this was impossible while Jacob was yet unborn] “but of him that calleth) verse 11. It was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger, verse 12. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.” The text which you have chosen as a motto for your second sermon, is quoted by the Apostle from Gen. xxv. 23. and stands thus: *Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.* It is evident beyond contradiction,

that these words were spoken, not of Jacob and Esau in their individual capacity, but of their posterity. *Two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels*, which plainly refers to the *Israelites* and *Edomites*. *The elder shall serve the younger*. This never was the case with Jacob and Esau as individuals. Esau never served Jacob in person; and neither did his posterity until the days of David, when the Edomites, who were the descendants of Esau, were brought under the dominion of Israel, 1 Kings xi. 16.—1 Chron. xviii. 12.—2 Sam. viii. 14. The election therefore spoken of here, cannot be personal election to eternal life, which is inseparably connected with personal reprobation to eternal death. It was necessary that some one should be selected from the human family, from whom the promised Messiah should descend according to the flesh, and through whom the records of the grand promise, and the revelations of God should be preserved. To these distinguished privileges the Apostle asserts, verse 4. the Israelites were elected. This selection depended solely on the sovereign pleasure of God; whose perfect knowledge of all persons, cases and circumstances, qualified him to make the wisest choice. He no doubt saw, that Jacob and his posterity were the fittest persons to answer his benevolent design; and therefore made choice of him and his descendants, in preference to Esau and his progeny. All this can be admitted without supposing that Jacob and his posterity were unconditionally elected to everlasting life, and

that Esau and his descendants were unconditionally reprobated to everlasting death. If, because Jacob is called the elect of God, he were elected to eternal life, without any regard to his faith and obedience, it will follow that all his numerous progeny were also elected, for they are uniformly called the elect, the people of God. But will you affirm that all the Israelites were elected to eternal life, merely because they are denominated the elect? To be consistent with yourself, you should. This, however, would be running upon the point of the apostle's argument, ver. 6. *For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel.* Although they were exalted to peculiar privileges, they were not all the genuine Israel of God, because they were not diligent to make their eternal *election sure*.

4. You think, "If election and reprobation appear bad when applied to Jacob and Esau, as individuals, they must appear vastly worse, when applied to them as the heads of two great nations," p. 56. So indeed they would, if we admitted your notion of unconditional election and reprobation to eternal life and eternal death. But when it is considered that the election of the Israelites to certain external privileges, from which the Edomites were reprobated, did not necessarily affect their eternal interests, all that apparent badness disappears, and we behold an illustrious display of the wisdom and goodness of God. But you suppose, "Esau never had any piety," p. 56. If this be so, how could the apostle say, *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and*

Esau, concerning things to come? Heb. xi. 20.— This certainly could not have any reference to the earthly inheritance, which had been already bestowed on Jacob ; and for this blessing Esau sought carefully with tears, but could not obtain it ; neither could it refer to Canaan, for in that case it failed of its accomplishment.

This blessing is recorded, Gen. xxvii. 39, 40. “Thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above ; and by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother ; and it shall come to pass, when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck.” The reader is left to determine for himself respecting the import of this paternal blessing. It seems, however, that the *fatness of the earth*, and the *dew of heaven from above*, which appear to have been pronounced upon Esau in person, denote two different blessings, from the *earth*, and from *heaven* ; *thou shalt serve thy brother* ; this could not apply to him personally, because he never served Jacob in person, but must intend the future service of his descendants—*thou shalt have the dominion*, must refer to some time yet in futurity. It does not appear therefore that Esau was laid under an absolute curse by his father ; but he was blessed with the *fatness of the earth*, and with the *dew of heaven*, in his own person.

Let any man of candor, impartially examine the two characters of Jacob and Esau, and he will find as much to applaud, at least, in Esau, as in Jacob,

previous to the conversion of the latter, which appears to have happened on his way to *Padan-aram*. They were both, it is true, faulty in many respects ; and if there be any difference, Jacob appears most blameable. From a view of their personal characters, therefore, we can find nothing to justify your chimerical notion of Jacob's unconditional election to eternal life, and Esau's reprobation to eternal death. It is undeniably manifest that the election spoken of in this chapter is national, and therefore cannot have respect to the eternal states of men.

5. In page 57, you advance one of the most shocking ideas which can enter into the heart of man ; 'That God determined, before either of the children were born, without any respect to their moral characters, " the other (Esau) to be a vessel of wrath fitted to destruction." I confess when I read this sentence, my mind was filled with astonishment. I was ready to cry out, Good Lord, is this thy character ? It cannot be—it is utterly impossible for the *God of love*, of justice and goodness, to form such determination. It is the blackest impeachment imaginable of his *holy* and *merciful* character ! If an earthly parent were to punish his child with only a temporary chastisement, without assigning any other reason, than because he *would*, without having even the good of the child in view, he would be justly and universally abhorred. To suppose the Almighty should bring an intelligent and immortal spirit into existence, on purpose to fit him for damnation, is to represent him in a worse

point of light than Nebuchadnezzar, who caused the three Hebrew children to pass through the fire to satisfy his revenge. To say he had a view to the general good, is to say nothing to the purpose. I have already exposed the fallacy of this argument. Your assertion, sir, is bold, cruel, and unscriptural. It is bold, because unsupported by any argument. It is cruel, because it represents the Almighty as acting more cruelly than *Nero*, when he ordered the city of Rome fired, that he might have a pretext to accuse the christians. It is unscriptural, for the scriptures assert no such thing.* To what has been

* *The elder shall serve the younger*, "This passage," says Dodd, "serves for a key to explain the ninth chapter of Romans, where the words are quoted; for it proves to a demonstration, that this cannot be meant of God's arbitrary predestination of particular persons to eternal happiness or misery, without any regard to their merit or demerit; a doctrine which some have most impiously fathered on God, who is the best of beings, and who cannot possibly hate," [this is not strictly true in every sense, though what follows is] "far less absolutely doom to eternal misery, any creature that he has made; but that it means only, his bestowing greater external favours, or if you please, higher opportunities of knowing and doing their duty, upon some men, than he does upon others; and that merely according to his own wise purpose, without any regard to their merits or demerits, as having a right to confer greater or smaller degrees of perfection on whom he pleases." Thus far Dr Dodd; and Dr Clarke adds in his note on the place, "The doctrine of *unconditional* predestination to eternal life and eternal death, cannot be supported by the example of God's dealings with *Esau* and *Jacob*; or with the Edomites and Israelites. After long reprobation, the Edomites were incorporated among the Jews, and have ever since been undistinguishable members of the Jewish church." (See

said respecting Esau's piety, it may be added, That when Jacob returned from Padan-aram, remembering, no doubt, his unjust conduct towards his brother, in the case of defrauding him out of his birth-right, and also in lying and cheating him out of the paternal blessing; he sent presents forward to appease the supposed wrath of his brother Esau; but after meeting, Jacob said unto Esau, *I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me.* See Gen. xxxii and xxxiii. 10. Here Jacob acknowledged the superior dignity and goodness of Esau, and also his willingness to forgive past injuries. At this time Jacob's name had been *changed*, and his nature *renewed*; so that he no longer strove to supplant his brother. We have no authority therefore for concluding that God made Esau on purpose for destruction. Were we to allow, that he was wicked, as was *Cain*, it no more proves that this was the ultimate *end* of his existence, than it does that God can lie. This is a point assumed, on the supposition that your doc-

also Newton on Prophecy.) "The Jews, on the contrary, the *elect of God*, have been cast off, and reprobated, and continue so to this day. If a time should ever come when the Jews shall *all* believe in Jesus Christ, (which is a general opinion) then the Edomites, which are now absorbed among them, shall also become the *elect*. And now, Isaac finds *both his children* within the pale of the Jewish church, equally entitled to the promise of salvation by Jesus Christ, of whom he was the most impressive and the most illustrious *type*. See Dr. A. Clarke on Gen. xxv. 23.

trine is true, which can never be substantiated, so long as God remains just and good.

6. You only beat the air in your first section, where you say, "It is to be shown that election is not founded on works," p. 58. Here you suppose that our doctrine, either by principle or consequence, makes election to eternal life, depend solely on our works. But this supposition arises from a mistaken apprehension of our doctrine. If a beggar were to receive from the hand of a wealthy benevolent man, something to supply his wants, does it follow that the act of the beggar in receiving the gratuitous donation from his benefactor, is the *foundation*, or *meritorious cause* of his subsistence? By no means. The *benevolence* of the donor, and not the *act* of the beggar, is the source of the poor man's subsistence. Mankind may be fitly compared to beggars, as they stand related to God. He offers them grace: if any comply with the condition of the gospel, and receive the gift of pardon by faith, does it follow that their act of receiving is the foundation of their pardon? It does not. The source of all the favours bestowed on fallen men, is in the plenitude of divine goodness. It was infinite condescension in God that caused him to provide a Saviour for sinners, and to accommodate the terms of acceptance and salvation to the weakness of man. The question is not therefore, as your readers might infer, whether our election to eternal life be predicated of *works* or *grace*; but whether grace, the grace of eternal life, be unconditionally bestowed

on some, and whether all the rest be unconditionally reprobated to eternal death, without any respect to their wicked works. All the scriptures therefore which you have quoted to prove that *grace* is the *first* and *moving* cause of our salvation, makes nothing against us ; and all you say against works being the *foundation* of our election, is wide of the point, as we never held they were. Nevertheless, that *believing* in the Lord Jesus, is the condition of our justification here, as penitent sinners, and that those *good works* which spring from a living, justifying faith, are the evidences both of our justification here and hereafter, is abundantly manifest from scripture. *By grace are ye (not shall be) saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves ; it is the gift of God, Eph. ii. 3. And by him, all that believe are justified from all things, Acts xiii. 39. He that believeth on him is not condemned ; but he that believeth not is condemned already, BECAUSE he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God, John iii. 18.* Who that reads these scriptures can doubt but that faith in Christ is a *condition* on the performance of which our justification is suspended ? Any man who can doubt it, with such plain and positive testimony before his eyes, may turn sceptic and doubt of every thing. If this be so, that our justification is suspended on our believing, that believing is the expressed *condition* of justification, then your doctrine of *unconditional* election to eternal life, is erroneous. And if this part of your system be erroneous, so also

must the dreadful counterpart of it be, namely, *unconditional reprobation to eternal death*. In regard to this part of your system, I believe you have quoted no scripture to support it—and you are quite excusable ; for indeed there are none to be found.

The word which the translators of our bible have rendered *reprobate*, is *αδοκιμος*, (*adokimos*) and this comes from *δοκιμος*, (*dokimos*) which signifies to *try*, *prove*, as metals are tried and proved in the fire. It is applied figuratively to man—Previous to justification all men are *αδοκιμος*, reprobates ; that is, such as will not bear the test, when their characters are examined by the standard of Christianity. They must first be cast into the refining fire of God's Spirit, until the dross of sin be separated from them, and then they are *δοκιμος*, elect, or *approved*. This word occurs but eight times in all the New-Testament. In 1 Cor. ix. 27. Paul saith, *Lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be αδοκιμος, a cast-away, or reprobate ;* one that will not bear the test of examination at the great day ; or one that will not be *approved* by his judge. In 2 Cor. xiii. 5, 6, 7.—Rom. i. 28.—2 Tim. iii. 8. and Tit. i. 16. it is rendered *reprobate* ;—in Heb. vi. 8. *rejected*. Any person who will consult the places where this word occurs, will be convinced that it is used to designate a person whose conduct is disapproved in the sight of God—Those who have so much of the *dross of sin* about them, that, when weighed in the scale of truth, they are *found wanting*. But the *δοκιμος*

(*dokimoi*) the *elect*, it appears, are those of whom God approves. They having been refined in the fire of God's Spirit, and still enduring all the severe trials which come upon them, are found *pure* and *good*, and shall be found unto praise and glory, if they become not, by departing from God, *reprobates*, or cast away, 1 Cor. ix. 27. It appears therefore, that the *reprobates* may become *elect*, and the *elect* may become *reprobates*. Here is no foundation for the doctrine of *eternal* and *unconditional* election and reprobation. See *Parkhurst*.

Allowing the accuracy of the above remarks, that the reprobates are such as are *disapproved*, after being *tried*, how can they be reprobated from all eternity, seeing they could not be *tried* before they had an opportunity of *acting*? Can gold be tried before it exists? To say that God *knew* who would stand the test of examination, is no argument in favour of Hopkinsianism. This declares that God's determination respecting the final estates of men, was antecedent to his *knowledge* of them; so that prescience itself is dependent for its existence upon preordination. See Letter I. p. 34, 35.

God saith concerning the Israelites, *I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction*. Were they in the furnace of affliction before they were born? If not, this *choice* could not have been from all eternity.

8. In Eph. v. 6. the Apostle Paul assigns a reason why impenitent sinners are finally damned.—
“ Let no man deceive you with vain words, for be-

cause of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." The things to which the Apostle alludes, are mentioned in the preceding verse—*For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.* How different the opinion of this Apostle from yours! "It is not," say you, "assigning a sufficient reason for their reprobation, to say they were wicked, and would not accept of mercy," p. 63. Now sir, either you, or Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul, are mistaken. Paul saith in the above passage, "The wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience, *because* of their wickedness." You say, "This is not a sufficient reason." Paul saith, 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11, 12. That sinners are damned *because* they received not the love of the truth *that they might be saved*—and for this *cause* God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. But you say, this is not a sufficient reason. If the Apostle had believed your doctrine, would he not have said, *they are damned on account of an eternal decree of reprobation*, which immutably secured their wickedness, that they might be vessels of wrath and "suitable objects" of eternal indignation? Jesus Christ said, Luke xiii. 34. How oft would I have gathered you together, and ye would not? Behold your house is left unto you desolate. *Ye would not accept of mercy*, and there-

fore ye shall be rejected, i. e. reprobated. You reply, "This is not assigning a sufficient reason for their reprobation." Are then Dr. Hopkins and yourself wiser than Jesus Christ, and his servant Paul! Surely this is being wise above what is written. Were I to quote all the scriptures which assign the wickedness of sinners, and their refusal to accept of mercy as the *cause* of their final condemnation, I should transcribe a great part of the bible. They are fitted, it is true, for destruction; but they fit themselves by abusing the goodness of God, by an obstinate refusal of mercy; in a word, by *not receiving the truth that they might be saved*.

9. Although you strongly assert your belief in unconditional predestination, you seem ashamed of it in the discussion of your subject. For in p. 59 you very modestly say, "But why did the Lord of Angels *suffer* them to rebel?"—and p. 60, "Why were such a part of the Angels suffered to apostatize?" This language, sir, ill becomes the lips of such a rigid predestinarian as you have avowed yourself to be. To hold that God *absolutely decreed*, before the foundation of the world, that precisely so many intelligent beings should apostatize, and that every particular sin of their lives were not only unalterably fixed in the mind of God, but also "brought to pass" by him: and then talk about *suffering* their apostacy, is truly ridiculous. Why not speak out, and ask, Why did God *decree* and *foreordain* that Angels should rebel, and that precisely so many of the human family should apostatize?

tize, and remain in their apostacy, and finally be damned. And why not give a categorical answer to these questions, in conformity to your unscriptural doctrine? *Because he would.* Does the absurdity of your doctrine appear so glaringly horrid at some times, that you wish to draw a veil over it?

10. Page 64; "Paul mentions the greatness of his sin, as one reason why he obtained mercy." Is this correct? He is so far from assigning the "greatness of his sin" as a reason why he obtained mercy, that he says, 1 Tim. i. 13. But I obtained mercy *because I did it ignorantly and in unbelief.* These words seem to suppose, that if he had *believed* Christ was the promised *Messiah*, and if he had *known* him to be the person against whom he acted so violently, he should not have obtained mercy. He says indeed, in v. 14, *And the grace of our Lord Jesus was exceeding abundant with faith and love.* And in v. 16, "Howbeit, for this *cause* I obtained mercy, (not because he had been a great sinner, but *because of the abundance of the grace of Jesus Christ*) *that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them who should hereafter believe in him to life everlasting.*" The *cause* of which he here speaks, is not that he had been a great sinner, (although he had been even a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious, v. 13.) but that Christ's long-suffering might be manifest,—and that the Apostle might be a pattern to others, not of "indwelling sin," but of faith and purity.—In the whole passage, I cannot discover that the

Apostle had the remotest allusion to sin, as a *reason* why he obtained mercy. O sir, what a dangerous sentiment you have advanced ! Paul obtained mercy because of the greatness of his sin : Let us *sin* then, may all blasphemers say, that grace may abound. Do not say that this objection was brought against the Apostle's doctrine, as well as against yours ; and therefore you teach the same thing. It is a legitimate consequence from your sentiment ; but was an unjust reflection upon the Apostle. Paul obtained mercy *because* he was a great sinner. " Well then," says a correct reasoner, " the same *cause* under the same circumstances, will produce the same *effect* ; I will therefore be a great sinner, that I also may obtain mercy." Will you undertake to prove that his reasoning is not conclusive ?

II. 1. I proceed in the second place to notice some of the texts of scripture which you have cited, not indeed to prove unconditional reprobation, but *your* doctrine of eternal and unconditional election. " *All* that the Father giveth to me shall come to me," John vi. 37. All *were* given to Christ ; for he *tasted death for every man*, Heb. ii. ix. If he tasted death for all, as you yourself allow, then all were given to him ; for he is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe, 1 Tim. iv. 10. If therefore you insist upon the words in the absolute and unlimited sense, universal salvation would be the result. But such a result is directly repugnant to scripture, and therefore such interpretation is ex-

admissible. The verb *giveth* being in the present tense, it must have reference, not to those for whom Christ died *merely* ; but to those who are given to him as his people. And here the question will arise, Who are thus given to Christ? All who believe on him ; for said he to the Jews, *If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins*, John viii. 24. The obvious meaning is, All who believe on me, inasmuch as they do *the work of God*, (John vi. 29.) and thereby fulfil the *condition* required, shall come to me. The principal hindering cause, *unbelief*, being removed, I will draw them unto me ; so that, however wicked they may have been, *I will in no wise cast them out*. *Ye have not chosen me—* Ye did not select me as the Saviour of the world—*but I have chosen you*—selected you, who have forsaken all to follow me, from the mass of mankind, to be my ambassadors to men, having *ordained* you my Apostles, that ye might bring forth the fruit of holiness, in your lives, and in the success of your ministry : and that this fruit might not wither, but remain as incontestible evidences of your faith in me, John xv. 16.

2. As many as were ordained to eternal life believed, Acts xiii. 43. As many as were disposed, (so is the French rendering, & *tous ceux qui étoient bien disposés pour la vie éternelle crurent*—and all those who were well disposed for eternal life, believed) by the preaching of the Apostle the Sabbath previous, to eternal life, now, under his preaching at this time, believed. If the Calvinistic sense of

this passage be admitted, we must take the following consequences with it—That if *all* who were included in the eternal decree of God for eternal life at that time believed, then there could be no converts from that city afterwards, from among that generation. For the text saith, as *many* as were ordained, &c. It will also follow that all who did not believe, such as the blaspheming Jews mentioned in verse 45, were ordained to eternal death; and that this appointment to eternal death was the only reason why they did not believe. This, I suppose, you think is a “sufficient reason.” However, Paul assigns a different one—he tells them, verse 46, *Seeing ye put it (the word of God) far from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo we turn to the Gentiles; for so hath the Lord commanded us.* Here then for once it seems, Paul acted according to the command of God, although you think the decree and command are opposite. Letting this, however, pass, I ask, Is it not more scriptural and rational, and more congenial to the dictates of common sense, to interpret the text under consideration in congruity with those texts which make *believing* a condition of justification, than to make it speak a language which represents the Almighty as absolutely and unconditionally dooming one half of his creatures to everlasting misery, for no other reason than to benefit the elect?

3. “This text has been most pitifully misunderstood. Many suppose that it simply means, that those in that assembly who were *foreordained*, or

predestinated by God's decree to eternal life, believed, under the influence of that decree. Now, we should be careful to examine *what* a word means before we attempt to *fix* its meaning. Whatever *τεταγμενοὶ* (*tetagmenoi*) may mean, which is the word we translate *ordained*, it is neither *προτεταγμενοὶ*" (i. e. *fore-ordained*, *fore-appointed*, or *fore-disposed*) "nor *προγεγενησμενοὶ*" (i. e. *before-determined* or *fore-ordained*) "which the Apostle uses, but simply *τεταγμενοι*, which includes no idea of *pre-ordination*, or *pre-destination* of any kind. And if it even did, it would be rather hazardous to say, that all those who believed at this time actually *persevered unto the end*, and *were saved unto eternal life*. But, leaving all these precarious matters, what does the word *τεταγμενος* mean? The verb *ταττω* or *τιςσω* signifies to *place*, *set*, *order*, *appoint*, *dispose*; hence it has been considered here as implying the *disposition*, or *readiness of mind* of several persons in the congregation, such as the *religious proselytes* mentioned ver. 43, who possessed the reverse of the *disposition* of those Jews, who *spoke against those things, contradicting and blaspheming*, ver. 45. Though the word in this place has been variously translated, yet of all the meanings ever put on it, none agrees worse with its nature and known signification, than that which represents it as intending those who were *predestinated* to eternal life: this is *no* meaning of the term, and should never be applied to it. Let us without prejudice consider the scope of the place: the Jews contradicted and blasphemed, the

religious proselytes heard attentively, and received the word of life; the one party were utterly *indisposed*, through their own stubbornness, to receive the gospel; the others, destitute of prejudice and prepossession, were glad to hear, that in the order of God, the Gentiles were included in the covenant of salvation, through Christ Jesus; they therefore in this good *state and order* of mind, believed.— 'Those who seek for the plain meaning of the word, may find it here: those who wish to make out a sense, not from the Greek word, its use among the best Greek writers, and the obvious sense of the evangelist, but from their own creed, may continue to puzzle themselves and others; *kindle their own fire, compass themselves with sparks, and walk in the light of their own fire, and of the sparks which they have kindled; and in consequence lie down in sorrow*, having bidden adieu to the true meaning of a passage so very simple, taken in its connexion, that one must wonder how it ever came to be misunderstood and misapplied." See Dr. A. Clarke on Acts xiii. 48.

4. You also quote Rom. viii. 29. "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." To understand the primary meaning of the Apostle in this passage, it is necessary to call to mind his

principal design in this epistle, which was, among others, to vindicate the conduct of God in casting away the Jewish nation, for their unbelief, and in receiving the believing Gentiles into the church. The Jews might object, that if God indiscriminately rejected their nation, good and bad, he were both unjust and unfaithful. This objection was introduced in the third chapter, verse 5. Furthermore, the calling of the Gentiles was very offensive to the Jews, and it was a topic all along insisted upon by the Apostle Paul. The Jews considered it as a proof of the mutability of God's designs, to reject them, and adopt the Gentiles for his people. To this objection the Apostle opposes his doctrine of election, predicated of God's prescience. God knew the Jews would abuse their high and distinguished privileges, that they would reject the Messiah, and according to this foreknowledge, he determined to reject them. He also knew that the Gentiles would believe in Jesus Christ, and therefore he determined before the foundation of the world, to call them by the gospel, and give them an offer of salvation. This point is more particularly insisted upon, Eph. i. 4—13. To those who should say that God was unjust and unfaithful in casting away the Jews, we may understand the Apostle saying, no; *He hath not cast away his people whom he foreknew*, chap. xi. 2. Those among the Jews whom he foreknew would embrace the Lord Jesus, he did not reject, any more than he did the believing Gentiles; on the contrary, he

predestinated them to be conformed to the image of his Son, as the means of their salvation. It was predicted by Malachi, chap. iv. 2. that those among the Jews, who feared the *name* of the *Lord Jehovah* when Christ should come, should be blessed with the rising beams of the *Sun of righteousness*; and that they should *go forth*, from the general destruction which would come upon the nation when the wrath of God should *burn as an oven*, and *grow up as calves of the stall*. Those who feared the name of the Lord were thus appointed, and were also called by the preaching of Christ and his Apostles. Go not, said Christ to his Apostles, *in the way of the Gentiles*, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.—Give them the first call; gather in the elect from among them first. And whom he thus called, and who obeyed the call, (for many are called, but few chosen, Matt. xxii. 14.) *them he also justified*; and whom he thus justified, them he also glorified. Those who are called by the gospel, are called to come into the church—The glorification therefore here spoken of, I conceive to be, the honour conferred on the believing Jews, in being received into the church of Christ, in conjunction with the Gentiles.* Here the Apostle shews that God was nei-

* When we read of *glory*, our minds generally ascend to heaven, as if there were no other way to be *glorified*, but by going *there*. But this is evidently a mistake. That *glory* frequently signifies the privileges of the church militant, is manifest from scripture. Thus Romans ix. 4. To whom pertaineth the adoption, and *glory*, and the covenants, &c. This is spok-

ther mutable, nor unfaithful; for he had not cast away his believing people, whom he foreknew among the Jews, any more than the believing Gentiles; and that this conduct of the Almighty was perfectly according to his invariable designs of benevolence towards mankind: and also that this is his method of saving men, he first calls, then justifies, and then glorifies.

5. But if this interpretation be rejected, and you insist that the text must be understood in the absolute sense, then you must take the following consequences. Inasmuch as the verbs are all in the past tense, whom he *foreknew*—he *did predestinate*—he *called*—he *justified*—he *glorified*, it will follow that

en in reference to the visible symbol of the divine presence, the *shekinah*. The residence of God, among the Israelites in the temple, was called the manifestation of his glory. “Properly *glory* denotes the bright rays about the body of the sun, by which the sun himself and all other objects are seen, 1 Cor. xv. 41.” Christ is called the *sun of righteousness*. And it is in the Church that the beams of his glory are principally beheld. Those therefore who are the true members of his Church, are *glorified*; because they come under the “bright rays” of his glory. Peter speaks of the *glory* that *should follow* the sufferings of Christ, 1 Pet. i. 11. What glory could this be but the unfolding of the wonderful love of God to his believing people, in collecting them together to the distinguished privileges of his church. Paul’s desire was, That the word of God might have free course, run and be *glorified*. As God in a peculiar sense manifests his presence in his church, so those who are brought into it may be said to be *glorified*. God acknowledges them as his peculiar people.

In this manner I conceive those to be glorified, spoken of in the above text.

all whom he foreknew as *his people*, were called in, and justified, and glorified before the Apostle wrote ; for, according to this view of the subject, precisely as many as he *foreknew*, (and you will not limit his knowledge) were glorified. In this case you must either admit that the elect were called, justified, and glorified from all eternity, which is impossible ; or that *all* the elect were called in and glorified before the epistle to the Romans was written. But either of these suppositions involves an absurdity, as impossible to believe, as that a man *can* love God, and *cannot* at the same time.

6. Whatever may have been the Apostle's meaning in the passage under consideration, it is entirely foreign to your purpose. You utterly deny that election is founded upon God's foreknowledge ; whereas, whatever election the Apostle had in view, it is certain he founded it upon *prescience*. This idea is totally repugnant to your doctrine, which makes *prescience* itself depend upon *foreordination* for its existence. To make this text therefore support your system, you must prove that the Greek word προεγνω, (proegno) *foreknow*, should be translated *foreordain*. But this you can no more do, than you can prove that God's counsel includes every other counsel, and yet that there are many counsels *against* his counsel. It is submitted to the candid, intelligent reader, whether the Apostle in the above passage be not tracing the order in which God generally saves souls, instead of describing a regular-chain of causes and effects.

7. The same sentiment is inculcated by the Apostle Peter, 1 Epistle i. 2. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." In these words the Apostle declares the election, of God's *foreknowledge*, not of his *foreordination*—and affirms that the *medium* of election is through *sanctification of the Spirit*. The election therefore, of which the Apostle speaks, could not be *eternal* and unconditional, seeing believers could not have been sanctified in *eternity*. Neither could they be sprinkled with *the blood of Christ* before they had an existence. If they were elected through the medium of sanctification of the Spirit, as the Apostle asserts they were, their election was in *time*, *after* they were born, and *conditional*, *when* they received the blood of sprinkling, and the *sanctification of the Spirit*.

8. You next quote from Eph. i. 4. *According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love*. It should be particularly noticed, that this was an address to the whole church at Ephesus; and therefore it cannot have any reference to individual election to eternal life. In this beautiful passage of scripture, the Apostle, by a figure of speech called *prolepsis*, obviates a very common objection to his doctrine, that the establishment of the Gospel dispensation, on the ruins of the Jewish church, proved a change in the de-

signs of God. This objection arose out of the bigotry of the Jews, and their violent opposition to the peculiarities of Christianity. To cut this objection asunder, the Apostle reminds his Ephesian brethren, of God's predetermination, (v. 5.) before the foundation of the world, to establish the Gospel dispensation, and to call the Gentiles into the Christian church, together with those Jews who received the Messiah. And therefore he says, *Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.* From the first verse to the tenth, inclusive, he addresses the whole body of the Christian church at Ephesus, who were elected to the exalted privileges of the Gospel dispensation, *according to the good pleasure of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will;* and asserts that the end of this election was, that *they should be holy, and without blame* (not more and more "guilty and ill-deserving," as you inform your elect ones in Durham they are) *before him in love.* In the eleventh verse, he seems more particularly to speak of himself and other Jewish believers—*In whom ALSO WE have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated, &c.—V. 12. That we should be to the praise of his glory who FIRST TRUSTED in Christ.* By the adverb *also*, and the words *first trusted*, the Apostle contradistinguishes the Jewish converts from the Gentile believers: then in verse 13, by a change of the person, it is evident he addresses himself more immediately to the Gentile be-

lievers at Ephesus—*In whom YE ALSO TRUSTED, after that ye heard the word of truth the Gospel of your salvation.* From all which it manifestly appears, that the Apostle designed to vindicate the divine character from the charge of *mutability* and injustice in establishing the system of Christianity, and calling to the blessings of it, the Gentiles ; because, according to the Apostle's argument, this was in conformity to the benevolent intention of the Almighty before the foundation of the world ; and therefore this part of his conduct was no impeachment of his veracity to the Jews, nor no new and recent design, which arose from disappointment and mutability. In this view of the subject, the unchangeable goodness of God towards the Gentile world, shines with such lustre as to inspire the most unshaken confidence in both *Jewish* and *Gentile* believers.

9. To suppose the Apostle had individual and personal election in view, in the above passage, is to suppose that all the members of the Ephesian church were unconditionally elected to everlasting life. In this case what becomes of your doctrine of the certain perseverance of all the elect ? In attempting to prove which, you overthrow your doctrine of election, if you rest its support on such passages as the above ; for in page 117 you observe, “ That Christ's church is made up of two sorts of members, who possess perfectly opposite characters ; yet by profession, they all possess one character.” This is undoubtedly correct ; and there-

fore when the members of the visible church are stiled *elect*, *chosen*, &c. as were the Ephesians, we are not to infer that they were from eternity unconditionally elected to everlasting life. Such an inference would contradict the whole tenor of scripture, as well as invalidate your own just observation above quoted. You will not, I presume, exempt the Ephesians from such strictures, for there was at least one, who had stolen.

10. It would far exceed the limits of these letters; to notice all the scriptures which have been wrested from their primitive design to support error. The ninth chapter of Romans, which has been so often appealed to, in vindication of unconditional predestination, is a sublime and able vindication of the conduct of God in selecting the Israelites to be the progenitors of the *Messiah*, and the repositories of the *lively oracles*, in preference to the Edomites. And also his righteous character in his conduct towards nations, in punishing them for their wickedness. This is exemplified in the case of *Pharaoh* and the Egyptians, and was now awfully illustrated in the rejection of the Jews for their unbelief. And lest any one should impiously charge their impenitency and consequent overthrow on God, the Apostle in verse 32. assigns a reason why they did not attain to the law of righteousness. *Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law.* How different the reason mentioned by Paul for their punishment, from that which your doctrine assigns. Dr. Hopkins saith expressly,

“God *moves, excites, and stirs up* men to do that which is sinful; and deceives, blinds, hardens, and puts sin into the heart, by a *positive, creative influence*.”* According to this, God is the *moving and exciting cause* of sin! Nay, he is the immediate author of it, inasmuch as he *puts it into the heart, by a positive, creative influence!* O Christianity! Thou immaculate offspring of the *Most High*, how is thy chaste character traduced by such unholy touches of Hopkinsian theology! He who *deceives*, must be a *deceiver*, and he who *blinds and hardens* people, must be *responsible* for that *blindness and hardness*. Such glaring absurdities, and manifest errors, need not a formal confutation. They carry not only *error and falsehood*, but *blasphemy* upon the very face of them. To mention them is sufficient to confute them. There is no necessity therefore for us to reject the ninth of Romans “as rigid predestinarianism,” nor to say, “It is blasphemous, and not fit to be read.” p. 55. On the contrary, we would recommend that chapter, with the *tenth* and *eleventh* as a masterly vindication of the righteous conduct of God towards those nations, who, by a long abuse of his exuberant goodness, have fitted themselves for destruction. It is also calculated to silence the unjust complaints of those, who are discontented with their external privileges; and to warn those who have received *five talents*, or *one talent*, against the abuse of them. The *eleventh*

* Contrast, p. 63.

chapter ought to be read by all Christians, and especially the lukewarm, *For if God spared not the natural branches (the Jews) take heed lest he spare not thee (Gentile). Behold the goodness and severity of God: On them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.* The election therefore, so far from being unconditional, is guaranteed to believers on the express condition of their *continuing* in his goodness. It is true, your inconsequent inferences from the ninth chapter, savours too much of “rigid predestinarianism,” and is too “blasphemous” to be fathered on God. It is well, however, for the character of the Apostle Paul, and for the character of the *sovereign* whose ambassador he was, that your comment is the comment of a fallible man, in which implicit faith is not required. Although you cannot have “the least mite of charity” for the man who thinks the blood of Christ has cleansed his heart from all sin, I hope the time will never come, when men shall think they *do God service* in burning these poor deluded reprobates, because they cannot believe God from all eternity doomed myriads of intelligent beings to hell, merely because he would. If any, however, should feel a disposition to do so, they might think that, inasmuch as “all sins are included in God’s perfect plan,” and also have a tendency to “promote the greatest good of the universe,” it would be perfectly right to exert it in exterminating such “sinless monsters.” How easy, upon your principle, for

men to persuade themselves, that it would be for the greatest good of the universe, to rid the earth of such *deluded heretics*, such “ministers of Satan,” who go about to deceive and devour the *elect*, who were secured by an unchangeable decree of God, before the world was made ! You seem wonderfully concerned for fear these ministers of Satan, as you indirectly insinuate Methodist Preachers are, should destroy some of the eternally elected ones. Did your faith stagger in an unguarded moment ? Or did you think our “malicious hatred” to God so inveterate, and that we were so omnipotently strong, that we could reverse the eternal decrees of God, and rob Christ of those whom he had bound by a chain of eternal decrees ! Make yourself perfectly easy, sir ; we will be content if we can save some of your imaginary reprobates, which you erroneously and unbelievably consign to eternal torments before they were born. We will strive not to hurt *the oil and the wine*, the precious elect. But if after all, we should find ourselves mistaken, your system proving true, we shall have the consolation to reflect that we fulfilled the *decree*, and consequently the *will* of God. And in this case, I know not which will be most happy, the deceived reprobate, or the undeceived elect. Both did the will of God, one precisely as much as the other ; only with this difference, our labour was the *hardest*, and most commendable, because without it the “greatest good of the universe” could not have been obtained : and certainly there must be much, *very much*

merit in those “wicked deeds” which secured the greatest possible good to the universe! The hearts of the reprobates will be so elated at the recollection of having been the wicked instruments of so much good, that hell itself will be turned to heaven; and instead of gnawing their tongues for pain, they will sing the praises of *sin* to all eternity!

11. No man in the world can shew that this consequence does not flow from your doctrine; for you assert that just so much sin is ordained as is for the greatest good of the universe. If so, the greatest good could not be realized without it. And most certainly, that which is the *cause* of the greatest good, must have the *greatest merit*. O happy sinners, who are the cause of so much good! Is not this deifying sin? That which is the cause of the greatest good, must be the greatest and best being. But according to your system, *sin* is the cause of the greatest good. If therefore you would be consistent in practice and principle, you ought no longer to preach against sin, lest you should be found to fight against God. But you have a reply at hand: you will, perhaps, say, God is the *efficient cause* of sin; and therefore *God* is the cause of good, and not *sin*. But do you not frequently assert, that sin was ordained because the greatest good of the universe required it? This dernier resort therefore, does not help you any. God is the *cause* of *sin*—*sin* is the cause of the greatest good—A good cause will produce a good effect, and a bad cause a bad effect. Which sword will you choose? If the

first, you make *sin good*. Will this do? If the *second*, if you assert *sin is bad*, and also say God is its *cause*, you make *God unholy*. Will you then cling to a system which makes you call *evil, good*, and *good, evil*? Which makes either *sin—good*, or otherwise *God, unholy*.

III. In part second of your third sermon, you make “an attempt” to answer some objections.—Let us see whether your “attempt” is effectual or not.

1. “It is objected that this view of the doctrine, destroys the accountability of creatures.” I suppose you mean rational creatures; and not stones and trees, and all material substances, all which are creatures. However, on your principle there is no difference; for the stone attracted to the earth by the law of gravitation, or the water descending from the clouds, are equally responsible with men. According to “this view of the doctrine,” a man acts as much under the control and immediate direction of an almighty energy, as does the needle under the attracting power of the load-stone. And it is as absurd to talk about the responsibility of man, on your “view” of election, as it would be to talk of the accountability of the needle in the compass. Your whole reply to this objection is so curious, and such a demonstration of your utter inability to accomplish your end, that, were it not for its verbosity, it would be worth transcribing. After making several unimportant remarks, not at all

in point, you at length, in p. 66, make an assertion, the truth of which no man will dispute—"It is the choice of the reprobate that Christ should not reign over them." Is it indeed? What a wonderful discovery this! I thought you were under obligation to reconcile man's accountability with your doctrine. We all know it is their choice. But the question is, can they choose otherwise? If you say they can, you allow they can add themselves to the elect number; and in that case in what a pitiful condition would the universe be, seeing it could not be good, unless there were reprobates in it. If you say they cannot choose otherwise, which you must say to be consistent with yourself, then you acknowledge they have no more freedom in their choice, than the feather which mounts the air. If you say they *can* if they *will*; then, I ask, why will they not? You probably reply, because they have no disposition. Why this want of disposition? "Because they are depraved." From whence their depravity? "From Adam's fall." Why did Adam sin and fall? "Because he would." Who determined his will? "God is as much the author of sinful as of holy volitions." Contrast p. 65. "Calvin, and the assembly of Divines at Westminster, assert that the divine decree and agency, respecting the existence of sin, imply more than a *bare permission*, viz. something positive and efficacious," *ibid*. From this it is evident, Adam could not have done otherwise than sin, unless it is supposed possible he could have broken the eternal decree, or

have *resisted* the *irresistible* agency of God ; and therefore, properly speaking, he was no more master of his own volitions than the elements were, out of which he was made.

If you say the want of a *disposition* to do otherwise, is the only cause why reprobates choose that Christ should not reign over them, it leaves us just where we were. For they cannot in the smallest degree be accountable for an indisposition, which is a necessary consequence of a sin in which they took no active part. This sentiment respecting an inability to do good, consisting altogether in the will, or disposition, is unscriptural, irrational, and contrary to experience. 1. It is unscriptural ; Paul saith, Rom. vii. 18. “ *For to will is present with me ; but how to perform that which is good I find not.*” Here then was the *will* or *disposition* to do good, but he was so circumstanced that he could not do it, *the good that I would I do not.* The same sentiment is inculcated to the Galatians, v. 17. “ And these are contrary one to the other, so that ye *cannot* do the things that ye *would.*” 2. It is irrational. It supposes that if a man only have an *inclination*, *will*, or *disposition* to do a thing, he must do it. If he have no disposition, he cannot. This disposition, then, *to do*, or *not to do*, is the sovereign of the soul ; so that all her powers lie prostrate before the disposition. Does it not follow from hence that every man is *impelled* by a secret something called a *disposition* to do every thing he does ? And does not this as totally destroy the free volitions of a man’s

mind, as it does to admit he is directed by an omnipotent fate? It certainly does—for it matters not by what name the controlling principle is distinguished, if man be compelled to obey its dictates, he is no longer free. Whether it be *God, motive, secret influence, fate, or disposition*, so long as any one of these is supposed to have such dominion over the soul, that she cannot act otherwise than she is thus compelled, she is no longer free. To be free, man must be complete master of his own volitions. He must not only have power to choose, but he must have power to choose otherwise, and to follow his choice.* 3. It is contrary to experience. This proves that a christian may have a disposition to love God as perfectly, and to serve him as purely as do the glorified spirits; but he cannot, while in this house of clay. A poor good man may have a disposition to feed the hungry, and clothe the naked, but cannot

* “Without *freedom*, there cannot be a *thinking being*, but only a bare percipient being; for thinking implies the *turning the perceptive capacity from one perception to another, by an act of the will*; otherwise a percipient being would have but one solitary perception always in view. And if the being doth not this by an act of the will, but is *impelled* by an external” (or internal) “principle, how can it be said to *think*, being *acted*, and not *active*, in every thing beyond bare perceptivity? What is it to *will*? Is it not to *act*? If it be to *act*, it is to have the internal *principle of action*: and if it hath the internal principle of action, it must be *free*, and *needs not* be further acted or impelled in thinking. An *active* being, a *thinking* being, and a *free* being then, are synonymous terms.” *Baxter’s Inquiry into the nature of the human soul*. vol. i. p. 203.

for the want of ability. So the wicked may have a disposition to do many wicked actions, from which they are restrained by an overruling providence.—Balaam had a disposition to curse Israel, and so far as human power is necessary, he had ability, although he was prevented by a fear of God. Paul had a disposition to do some good thing, I suppose to get free from the body of death, under which he groaned previous to justification ; but he could not, on account of the *law of sin in his members*. It appears therefore improper to make any one faculty or power of the soul, sovereign over all the other members. The soul having command over her own volitions within certain prescribed limits peculiar to human beings, she may act or not act at pleasure.—The grace of God is always ready going before in matters of religion, “preventing,” restraining, enlightening, and directing the inquiring, serious mind, in all things pertaining to godliness. With this “illustrious, but tremendous power, heaven arms all rationals.” Before these intelligent, responsible beings, God places life and death, and bids them *choose life that they may live*. The free, moral agency of man is so evident, that all are forced to admit it in some sense. But after admitting the fact, to shelter their tottering system, which clashes against it, some refine it so much, that its essence is refined away. Thus, sir, you say man acts freely. But how? Why that he freely follows the corrupt principles of his nature, which God from all eternity determined he should have ; so that, in *fulfilling*

the desires of the flesh and mind, he exactly fulfills the secret, and uncontrollable will of God, i. e. he freely does what God decreed he should freely do; and he cannot do otherwise, any more than he can fly a thousand miles in the air! I excuse you, however, for only giving this poor, bald freedom to man. It is all your system will allow. Your own good sense, I am persuaded, would have allowed more; but you were so fettered with the chain of decrees, that you *could not* do the thing you *would*.

2. "How unreasonable it would be for the devils to find fault with Christ for not giving them a place in his kingdom, when, at the same time they are voluntarily engaged in seeking its destruction," &c. p. 66. Voluntarily engaged! Were not all their sins decreed? Ans. p. 18. "As soon as we have proved, that *one* sin was decreed, we have removed all the objections which can be made against supposing that *all* the sins in the universe were decreed." Do you say God decreed they should act *voluntarily*? And are they accountable for doing *voluntarily* what God decreed they should *voluntarily* do! Does this make them responsible? God decreed that water should freely run downwards; therefore the water is accountable? Is not this a masterly argument to convince your readers, that your "view" of the doctrine of election is compatible with accountability? And so all you say about the hatred of the *Jews*, the wickedness of *Voltaire*, *Paine*, and *Hume*, amounts to no more than this, That they acted according to a predetermination of

the Almighty, which they could no more resist, than you can reconcile free agency and accountability in man, with your doctrine of irrespective decrees to eternal life, and eternal death. You ask, "Would it have been reasonable, that they should enter a complaint?" Yes; upon your principle, nothing more reasonable. On supposition your doctrine is true, and that they are in hell, they might justly say, Why should we be thus punished? We have fulfilled the eternal counsel of God's will, as much as *Peter, James, and John*. Nay, by our wicked publications, as they are called, we promoted the greatest good of the universe; and so necessary were our bad works, that the elect, as they are called, could not be so happy without them. We were included in the all-comprehensive counsel of eternal wisdom, and were a part of the perfect plan; and as the *whole* cannot be perfect without all the parts, we were equally necessary for the perfection of all things, as were *Peter, James, and John*. Must we then be eternally miserable for contributing so great proportion (for we were very laborious, and had influence over the minds of thousands,) towards the greatest possible good? Thus your doctrine puts a *reasonable complaint* into the mouth of every sinner on earth, or in hell. Neither is it possible, so long as you maintain your principle of universal decrees, of unconditional election to eternal life, and reprobation to eternal death, scripturally or rationally to silence their complaints. You may assert, as you have done in your

book. But the naked assertions of a fallible man, will not satisfy candid and inquisitive minds; and a system which manifestly contradicts a fact so evident as the freedom of man, cannot command the belief of the serious and rational inquirer after truth.

3. You next make "an attempt" to rescue your doctrine from the charge of *partiality*. That "a part may be either regarded or disregarded, from a desire to promote the general good," is admitted.—But what have the comparisons which follow, to do with your doctrine? p. 67. "We may separate a limb from the body, when its continuance would endanger the body."—Granted. But what should we think of a man who would make an incurable wound in one of his limbs, under pretence of promoting the good of his whole body? When a putrifying limb is amputated, is the good of the *whole body* obtained? Is not a limb lost? And can the body be as perfect without this limb, as it would have been with it? We grant that as man has unnecessarily brought himself into this disordered state, God may justly cut off some of the human family forever, as a punishment for their own avoidable disobedience. But on your principle it is absurd to talk about amputating a limb, because it is unsound; for this unsoundness itself, according to your notion, was produced by the Almighty. What would be said of a physician who should wound the body of a perfectly healthy person, so as to make the amputation of one half of his limbs necessary to

preserve the other half, under pretence of promoting the “greatest good of the whole” of this man’s body. Would he not be deemed a knave or a fool? “When fire breaks out in a city, they may pull down a certain building,—with a regard to the good of the whole city.” *Ibid.* True. But what would be said of a *magistrate* who should order a city set on fire, under pretence of seeking the welfare or general good of the *whole* city? What! burn a *part*, to promote the good of the whole! Such “consummate folly” does your doctrine attribute to the infinitely wise God.

4. *Ibid.* “Impartiality”—“does not require that *all guilty* persons should be *pardoned*.” That is not so clear. If all are *equally* guilty and ill-deserving, and all stand precisely in the same relation to God, *impartiality* requires that if one be pardoned, all should be pardoned. Strict *justice* will not require *any* to be pardoned. But if one among the many, who are *all equally* guilty, deserve commiseration, the doctrine of impartiality and justice teach, that *all* deserve commiseration. The only question is then, Whether all are equally guilty and ill-deserving? To this query you furnish a direct answer in page 60. “The human race all possess one character, and that is a wicked, ill-deserving character.” Again, p. 63, “For this was equally true, concerning those who are saved,” (see the preceding line) “until by the power of God, they were made willing to submit.” Now, sir, I ask, does not common sense dictate, that if one of these

be pardoned without any condition previously performed, and not the other, it is *partiality*? All are equally guilty, and equally helpless and miserable, and therefore impartiality declares as much in favour of one as another. You go on, "But on supposition, that extending pardon to the whole of this character, would diminish the happiness of the community at large, it would be a proof of partiality if they were all to be pardoned?" p. 67. Permit me to retort this argument,—But on supposition that the introduction of *sin* into the world, would diminish the happiness of the community at large, it would be proof of not only *partiality*, but also of *injustice* and *unmercifulness* to introduce it. But, sir, you suppose an impossible case on your system. For, you think, that those who are once pardoned, are perfectly secure, and will be *everlastingly happy*. How then could it diminish the happiness of the community at large, to make every individual member of such community forever happy? This is like your inconclusive reasoning about the "greatest good of the universe." You think it "agreeable to the common sense of mankind, that a sovereign has no right to put a difference between his obedient subjects." Is not this a mistake? May he not raise some to higher dignity than others?—Or do you mean, he has no right to make such vast difference between them, as you suppose God makes between the elect and reprobate. Hold to this, and your jarring system is ruined. Were not all the Angels, and Adam, God's *obedient sub-*

jects? And yet you hold that God put such a vast difference between some of the Angels, as to doom a part of them to everlasting perdition, merely because he would? And why did the Almighty constitute Adam guilty, by an eternal decree, while he was yet *innocent*? Here then is a difference as wide as heaven and hell, made among God's obedient subjects. It will be of no use to reply, That they rebelled. For according to your doctrine, the decree of reprobation was made antecedent to their rebellion; and their rebellion was "brought to pass by God himself," that they might thereby be fitted for eternal misery. Here therefore is an instance of the most glaring *partiality*, to make this eternal difference, by an irrevocable decree, while all were obedient subjects. And what had poor *Esau* done before he was born, to deserve eternal punishment? Do not say, "He sinned after he was born, and therefore his sin was the"—"immediate, deserving cause of his death." This is coming over to the scripture doctrine, supposing him to be miserable, which is much doubted. You do not allow, that the decree of reprobation is founded on wickedness foreseen. This would be giving up the point. The means are decreed, as well as the end. God therefore decreed *Esau's* wickedness, that he might answer the end of his reprobation!—It is not possible, sir, to rescue your doctrine from the charge of partiality. It is true you quote a precious text of scripture to prove that God is no respecter of persons; and you might have quoted

an hundred more without benefiting your cause any, so long as you hold to your first principle. We know God is no respecter of persons, and that *in every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him.* And we also know that your "view of the doctrine" fixes the reproachful blot of partiality upon his just character; and therefore your doctrine is unscriptural and irrational.

5. Your next "attempt" is, to obviate the objection, "That this view of the doctrine of election is calculated to encourage sin, and the neglect of the means of grace," p. 69. Instead of answering this objection, you simply assert, that "means are not thereby rendered unimportant." You then quote some scripture to prove that we are *chosen through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth*; and to recite some examples to prove that souls have been benefitted by the ministry of the word. But what is all this to the point? This we know is scriptural. But it is not a consequence of your doctrine. So far from it, that if your scheme be correct, means are always unavailing. If sinners are regenerated by an irresistible, almighty and secret influence, in which the sinner is entirely passive, outward means and external motives, are completely superceded. Indeed this you affirm in plain terms. Page 74, "No arguments that can be used will persuade rebels to submit, and sue for mercy upon the self-denying terms of the Gospel. The ablest preacher is as unable to persuade

a sinner to repent, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the weakest." If preachers cannot instrumentally persuade sinners to repent and accept of mercy, and if all arguments are unavailing, then it is certainly useless to preach, and lost labour to reason with them. It seems, however, you cannot go far without crossing your tracks, so intricate is error. See another instance of it. "Many of them determined to go to hear him," (i. e. Paul preach). "This they did repeatedly. The *consequence* was, they became believers in this religion, and were saved," p. 70. A *consequence* supposes a *cause*.— Their *faith* and *salvation*, you say were a *consequence* of hearing Paul preach. In the former case you say, the ablest preacher is unable to persuade a sinner to repent, &c. One would think that a system which involves its abettors in such contradictory assertions, would be suspected at least; and that its advocates would be induced to review their ground. Here also you proceed on the false supposition that your doctrine of unconditional election, is the only doctrine which teaches salvation by *grace*. This certainly is a mistake, as I have before observed. And all who have read our writings, and candidly considered our doctrines, well know that no body of Christians ever insisted upon this truth, *Salvation is of grace, through faith*, more strenuously than we do. Neither is it set aside by fair inference from any of our principles. We know that sinners must be brought to see their native vileness, and the utter inefficiency of their

own works to justify them in the sight of God ; and that they must believe in Christ as their glorious substitute, in order to be saved. That they must be born of the Spirit, and be made holy, to enter into the kingdom of God. But we also teach that *damnation* is wholly *from ourselves*; that it originates in the rebellious conduct of sinners, who abuse the forbearance of God, and not from a decree of reprobation, which was made antecedently to their existence, which secured the *wicked means* necessary to bring about the *dreadful end*. And that it ever did any good to preach your doctrine of unconditional election, and its dreadful counterpart, unconditional reprobation, remains to be proved. For that mankind are naturally sinners, and are entirely dependent on God for *every good and perfect gift*, are not the peculiarities of Hopkinsianism. These important truths of the Gospel, we deem essential to the salvation of sinners ; therefore we inculcate them on all proper occasions.—The success therefore, of a Gospel ministry does not depend upon preaching *your* doctrine of personal election. If indeed, it were true, a blessing would attend its publication. But it is not true, and therefore a holy God can never sanction it.—When you leave it out of sight, and preach Jesus Christ and him crucified, as the Saviour of sinners, (which is not a *peculiar* trait of your doctrine,) and exhort them to look to him alone for salvation, you no doubt see the blessed effects of your ministry in the awakening and conversion of souls. But think

you, sir, that you are the *only* men with whom this wisdom dwells? and that if the *peculiarities* of your system die, this wisdom must die with them? So you seem to intimate. But let any candid, considerate man, look into the Christian world, and review it for a century past, and then say, whom the Lord Jesus has delighted to honour, as instruments in his hands of *turning sinners from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God*. Although you are pleased to insinuate that we are the ministers of Satan, yet there are very many who can witness that we have been unto them a *sweet savour of Christ*. There is no necessity therefore to have the doctrine of unconditional election “providentially thrown in their way, to blast all their fair prospects, which they were building on themselves,” p. 76. By this you insinuate that all who do not believe in your *peculiar* doctrine, must necessarily “build on themselves.” It is well for us that we are able to disprove your uncharitable hint, by a thousand testimonies. It seems you make your doctrine of election the *foundation*. How different did the Apostle teach: *Other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus*. Do you not think you could have taught the people better, by telling them that unconditional election to eternal life, and predestination to eternal death, is the true foundation; and that, unless this were “providentially thrown in their way,” they would “build on themselves.” Thank God, there is sufficient room for all to build on Christ, the *real*

and *living* foundation, without going to the imaginary and false foundation of election and reprobation. Yes, fellow sinners, there is love enough in God the Father, and merit enough in his Son Jesus Christ, and efficacy enough in the Holy Spirit, to draw you all, to atone for your sins, and to apply the merits of this atoning blood so as to pardon and sanctify you wholly. If then you are not saved, it is your own fault. The Lord calls you to himself by a thousand alarming and endearing motives. There is no horrible decree of reprobation to stop your path. You may behold a smiling God in the face of Jesus Christ, if you are willing to forsake your sins, and return unto him.

6. P. 71. "If children are trained up in the way they should go, they are more likely to be saved, than they are if trained up in the way they should not go." Granted. But does your doctrine allow this? Quite the reverse; for you explode every kind of work from having any thing to do in our election. But here you turn a *rigid Arminian*, and put more confidence in works than you ought.—You even say, pious parents may "obtain blessings for their seed, whom he chose in Jesus Christ, before the foundation of the world." But if they were chosen before the foundation of the world, in Jesus Christ, I think all necessary blessings were obtained for them; and therefore in whatever way they may be trained up, they will unquestionably be saved. "God makes one part of his scheme suit the other," *ibid.* True; but does one part of *your* scheme suit

the other? Do your decrees and commands, which you say are in opposition one to the other, suit and harmonize together? Does that part of your “scheme” with which God is *displeased* suit that part with which he is *pleased*? How does that part of *your* scheme which asserts that God from all eternity reprobated a part of mankind to sin and damnation, “suit” that part which acknowledges the atonement was full and complete for all? Did Christ make atonement for those for whom God the Father never had any thoughts of mercy? Does not this scheme of yours set God the Father, and God the Son at variance? One determined before the foundation of the world that precisely so many of the human race should be first fitted for, and then sent to, everlasting destruction; the other actually died for their sins, that they might be saved. Can you make these jarring parts of your system harmonize? Perhaps you will say, “I am under no obligation to answer these impertinent questions.” But hold, sir, are you under no obligation to make the several parts of your system suit each other? You cannot suppose the public have such unlimited confidence in your naked assertions, as to set aside scripture, rational argument, and the dictates of common sense.

7. You think your doctrine does not encourage sin. Let us try it in an instance or two. *Esau*; you are an impious man. You ought not to injure the feelings of your pious parents by selling your birth-right, and then by marrying one of another

nation. This course of life will unavoidably lead you to destruction. "Destruction! Was I not doomed to destruction before the foundation of the world? And do you not teach that reprobates must be fitted in time by wicked works, for a miserable eternity? Besides, do you not openly affirm that all the sins in the universe were decreed? How then am I to avoid them? If I am absolutely doomed to misery in the world to come, I think it best to take my fill of sin in this. I will therefore indulge myself in malice and revenge, even to the murder of my cheating, elect brother, and any other sinful passion. Do not blame me. All the words I now utter, according to your doctrine, however wicked, and all my actions, however vicious, were eternally fixed by a 'perfect plan,' which includes 'all the sins in the universe.' How am I to reform? Moreover, you tell me, my sins are necessary for the 'greatest good of the universe.' And surely you would not have me refrain from that course of life which is so necessary for the perfection of the universe. As to your notion about hell, since I have heard your doctrine, I seriously doubt whether there be any punishment in the other world. For you inform me God is just and good, and I conclude that a just and good being cannot send me to hell for doing his will, and for being instrumental of so much good to the universe. If I were to reform all the days of my life, it would be of no avail if I am a reprobate; and if I am one of the elect, I shall finally be saved." Now sir, can you silence him

upon your “scheme?” Every candid man must acknowledge that his inferences are fairly drawn from your doctrines. Your doctrine therefore, is an encourager of sin, inasmuch as it takes away every motive to reformation.

3. Let us also try an experiment upon one whom we may suppose belongs to the elect number, but unconverted, except it be to your doctrine of unconditional election. *Jacob*; it is no time for you to lie and cheat, in order to accumulate wealth, which must soon perish. You ought to be laying up treasure in heaven—time is short, and eternity depends upon the right improvement of time. “Improvement of time! Would you have me turn Methodist, and undertake to merit heaven by my works? Have you not repeatedly told me I have no moral ability, in consequence of my total depravity, to return to God? Would you preach to the *totally* deaf, and exhibit the beauties of heaven to the blind? Have you not demonstrated that I cannot repent, until I am conquered by almighty power? And would you have me set about the impossible task of reforming myself? This would be ‘building on myself.’ In the day of God’s power I shall be brought in, if I belong to the elect; and if I am a reprobate, I can no more be saved than the strong decree of God can fail of taking effect. Besides, it appears to me you are acting inconsistent with your own principle, by exhorting me to repentance; for you have asserted, All the arguments of the ‘ablest ministers’ are unavailing. Why then would you use

them? My heart is in the hands of the Lord, and he can turn it which way soever he will. If God have placed his everlasting love upon me, I shall be saved do what I may. You also say, That Paul mentions the ‘greatness of his sins, as one reason why he obtained mercy.’ If so, the greater my sins, the more reason I have to hope for mercy. Therefore, as I feel a disposition to sin, which I am informed God decreed I should have, I think it best to indulge it, that I may obtain mercy: I also feel a desire for happiness; but I am forbidden to seek its gratification in religion, because you inform me this is selfish, and therefore sinful. Nay, according to your principle, which I believe, I can do nothing but sin, until God works a ‘radical change’ in my heart. And I may as well commit one sin as another, until the day appointed from all eternity arrives, in which I am to be converted. As to cheating and lying, I consider not myself accountable for that, since it was absolutely necessary to accomplish the purpose of heaven; for if I had not done it, my brother *Esau*, that *hated* reprobate, would have obtained the paternal blessing, and I should have been the *reprobate*, and he the *elect*. In this case the eternal purpose of God would have failed. So that”—Stop, thou blasphemer—“But why accuse of blaspheming? Were not all my thoughts, words and actions decreed?—And are they not all necessary for the ‘good of the great whole?’ ”

9. How, sir, will you obviate such objections?—

You might tell him that his reasonings are a mark of his reprobation—That he ought not to reply against God, seeing the potter hath power of the same clay; to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour. But this would not meet his objections; for they all naturally arise out of your favourite scheme. They are fair inductive reasonings from your first principle; and therefore it is not possible to refute them without departing from your premises. You may say, That the scriptures remove such objections. True, and therefore the scriptures know nothing of your doctrine. All the objections then which you have “made an attempt” to obviate, remain in full force. And from what has been written, may be predicated the following argument—

10. Any doctrine which destroys the *responsibility* of man, which represents the just and holy God as *partial*, that renders ineffectual the *means of grace*, and which *encourages sin*, cannot be the doctrine of the *Bible*: but your “view of the doctrine of election” does all this; and therefore it is not the doctrine of the Bible. The minor proposition, which alone is disputable, is proved in the preceding arguments.

That we may be diligent to make our calling and election sure, is, sir, the sincere prayer of yours, &c.

N. BANGS.

REV. S. WILLISTON, *Durham, N. Y.*

Rhinebeck, May 3d, 1815.

LETTER IV.

ON CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

Rev. Sir,

HAVING shewn in my former letter, the inconsistency of your doctrine of personal election, I come now to examine what you say respecting “sinful imperfection.” It is matter of some surprise, that, after all which has been said and written to the contrary, you should strive to impose upon the public a belief, that we hold, “that saints in this life are as perfect as they will be in heaven.” p. 103, note. O sir, is it fair, is it consistent with that *charity which hopeth all things*, thus to misrepresent a body of people! And how do you attempt to prove your assertion? Why, “By the argument which they use in their book of Discipline against the power of death to sanctify,” *ibid.* And pray sir, do you really believe in the *power of death* to sanctify? It would seem so by this observation of yours, as also from what you say about Paul’s desiring to *die*, because death would put an end to that body of sin under which he groaned.—But from what part of the scriptures do you prove this strange doctrine? Does not John say, 1 John

i. 7. *The blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth us from all sin?* Does not the apostle Paul ask, Heb. ix. 14. *How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?* In this passage they are said to be purged from dead works, *by the blood of Christ*, that they might serve the living God.—But if they do not serve the living God until purified, and if *death* acts as a purifier, then we do not serve the living God until after death. It is seriously doubted whether a solitary passage of scripture can be found in all the Bible to support the idea, that *death* is the *destroyer* of sin. On the contrary, death is all along represented as a *consequence of sin*, and the last enemy. Shall the effect destroy its cause? And shall the enemy of mankind do the most friendly and beneficial act towards them?—The “arguments,” therefore “which we use against the power of death to sanctify,” do not necessarily suppose, that we are as sinless in this life, as are the *spirits of just men made perfect*. It is true, we wish to ascribe the glory of our salvation, from the foundation to the top-stone, to Jesus Christ, and not to death; and in this respect we accord with the holy scriptures, which teach us to ascribe honour and glory *unto him that loved us, and washed us in his own blood*.

As the *consequence* which you endeavour to infer from our doctrine, has no connexion with it, so neither do we hold it in *principle*. And you might

have convinced yourself of this, if you had taken the trouble of looking in our discipline, instead of quoting merely from recollection, and perhaps from hearsay.* To convince you of your mistake, I will transcribe some passages from the discipline, published in 1808. P. 120, After having shewn the difference between the Mosaic economy, comprehending the political, moral, and ceremonial laws, and the Adamic law of innocence ; and also shewing the reason why men cannot fulfil the requirements of the latter, the author concludes thus,—
 “ Consequently, no man is able to perform the ser-

* As a proof that your memory is very treacherous, or that you never read our discipline, it is proper to observe, that in the discipline there is not one *argument* used against the *power* of death to cleanse from sin. It is simply asserted that a christian may be cleansed from sin “before death,” p. 58. This is the only place in the discipline which speaks on the doctrine of perfection, besides Mr. *Wesley's* “plain account,” from which I have made the above extracts ; and in neither of which is the argument to which you have alluded, used. Mr. *Fletcher*, in his 6th volume of “Checks to Antinomianism,” uses many unanswerable arguments against a “death purgatory.” And lest you should “attempt” to defend the error there exposed, or the no less fatal one of the *Roman Catholics*, I would take the liberty to recommend the volume just mentioned to your serious perusal. If you give it an impartial reading, I think you will no longer oppose the scriptural doctrine of christian perfection, and defend “sinful imperfection.” I would also recommend our discipline to your consideration, that you may not again expose your want of information respecting our doctrines ; for I prefer imputing your erroneous statements to inattention, than to wilful misrepresentation.

vice, which the Adamic law requires." Compare this with p. 106. "To explain myself a little farther on this head; 1. Not only *sin, properly* so called, that is, a voluntary transgression of a known law, but sin, *improperly* so called, that is, an involuntary transgression of a divine law, known or unknown, needs the atoning blood. 2. I believe there is no such perfection *in this life*, as excludes these involuntary transgressions, which I apprehend to be naturally consequent on the ignorance and mistakes inseparable from mortality. 3. Therefore *sinless perfection* is a phrase I never use, lest I should seem to contradict myself. 4. I believe a person filled with the love of God, is still liable to these in-

It is true that in several places in Mr. Wesley's *Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, it is affirmed, That christians may be cleansed from sin *before death*; which affirmation is supported by a number of texts—among which are the following,—“He hath raised up an horn of salvation for us—to perform the mercy promised to our fathers; the oath which he swore to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, should serve him without fear, in holiness, and righteousness before him, *all the days of our life*.” Luke i. ver. 69, &c. “Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, *so are we in this world*.” 1 John iv. 17. Could such unequivocal testimony be brought to establish your doctrine of predestination, you would have no cause to fear for its safety; because all believers in the authenticity of scripture must yield their assent to its evidence. I meant, however, to observe that there is a material difference between saying and proving that a christian may be saved from sin before death, and reasoning against the ‘*power of death to sanctify*.’”

voluntary transgressions. 5. Such transgressions you may call sins, if you please; I do not for the reasons above mentioned." Take another instance from page 123, "But the best of men may say, Thou art my light, my holiness, my heaven.—Through my union with thee, I am full of light, of holiness, and happiness. And if I were left to myself, I should be nothing but sin, darkness, and hell." "The best of men need Christ as their priest, their atonement, their advocate with the Father; not only, as the continuance of their every blessing depends on his death and intercession, but on account of their coming short of the law of love."

From these quotations, all of which are taken from our *discipline*, it is undeniably plain; 1. That we believe that a *perfect christian*, when considered in relation to the Adamic law, falls far short of its requirements; and therefore, on this account, may be denominated a transgressor. 2. But that no man since the fall is under that law, because it is, properly speaking, a law of works; whereas we are under the dispensation of grace. And will you undertake to prove, that the glorified saints in heaven do not perfectly fulfil this law? Are they not perfectly freed not only from sin, but also from all its consequences? At least at the resurrection, when their glorified bodies shall become like unto *Christ's most glorious body*. If you cannot prove this, neither can you prove that we hold to as great perfection *in this life*, as the saints in heaven pos-

sess. 3. That such is our situation, surrounded with temptations, the spirit shrouded in a corruptible body, our reasoning powers impaired, that we frequently *involuntarily* transgress the law of love, under which we are ; but that these are not *sins*, “properly so called.” 4. That therefore we continually need the atoning merits of Christ to wash us, and the Holy Spirit to help our infirmities.—After reading these remarks, it is possible you may think, that, among other sins, which you suppose you momentarily commit, you have been guilty, I hope unintentionally, of the sin of misrepresentation. Having made these observations to remove the misapprehension which may have arisen in the minds of your readers, respecting our ideas of christian perfection, I proceed to examine, in the first place, those texts of scripture with which you attempt to support your doctrine of “sinful imperfection.”

I. 1. If, when Solomon said, *There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not*, he meant there were none but that sinned against the *Adamic law*, that text cannot be considered as contradicting the doctrine of evangelical perfection, so often alluded to in the New Testament. It is probable he meant those *involuntary transgressions*, which, under the ceremonial law, required an atonement. Lev. iv. 13, 14, 15. *And if the whole congregation of Israel sin through ignorance, &c.—When the sin which they have sinned against it shall be known, then the congregation shall offer a young*

bullock for the sin, &c. According to the strict requirements of the ceremonial law, if a man happened to touch a dead carcase, he was accounted *unclean*, and therefore in the eye of that law a transgressor; and even these sins of *ignorance* required an atonement. Considered in relation to this, or the Adamic law, it may be truly said, There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not. To such a perfection of holiness as exempts christians from these infirmities, or sins, if you please to call them so, we do not expect any man to arrive in this life. And that Solomon never designed to teach that every just man must wilfully sin against a known law, every moment of his life, is evident from verse 13. *For he that feareth God, shall come forth of them all.* Solomon saith in the same book, *All is vanity and vexation of spirit.*—And you might as well infer from these words, that religion, and eternal happiness, is vanity, as to suppose from the former words, that he taught the absolute necessity of living in habitual sin.

2. As you lay great stress upon the experience of the Apostle Paul, from his words in the seventh of Romans, it is necessary to examine this part of the subject with attention. It is matter of no little surprise, that any considerate man should take it for granted, that in this chapter the apostle should be relating his present experience and exercise, as an apostolic christian, possessing the *liberty of God's children*; when it is so manifest, that he either introduced his experience while under the condemna-

tory sentence of the law, before he was delivered from its just sentence, merely to illustrate the doctrine he had previously taught ; or otherwise simply personated any man who should be groaning under the burden of sin, from a just apprehension of its rage, while under the cutting sentence of the righteous law. To prove that he did not design to represent his own christian experience, at the time he wrote, we need only collate what he there says with what he says elsewhere. He saith, chap. vii. 14. *But I am carnal, sold under sin.* Chap. viii. 6. *For to be carnally minded is death.* Chap. vi. 23. *For the wages of sin is death.* Now, according to your representation, Paul, in the seventh chapter, expressed his invariable experience as a christian. Let us bring this interpretation to the test of truth, and try its merits. *I am carnal.—To be carnally minded is death.—Sold under sin.—The wages of sin is death.* According to this he was an enemy to God, while reconciled to him—in the road to death, while enjoying *life and peace*. In chap. v. 10. he speaks of his being *reconciled to God*. Can a man be at enmity with God, and *reconciled* to him at the same time ? *To be carnally minded is death.* Can a man have the carnal mind, and of course be in the way to death ; and yet be spiritually minded, and of course be in the way of life and peace, at the same time ? Impossible. Chap. vii. 2. I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into *captivity* to the law of sin, which is in my members. Chap. viii. 2. For

the law of the spirit of *life* in Christ Jesus, hath made me *free* from the law of *sin* and death. *Darkness* is not more opposite to *light*, than the condition of the person mentioned in the former text, is, from the one spoken of in the latter. Is it possible that the apostle designed to teach that he was in *captivity* to the *law of sin*, and yet *free* from the *same law* at the *same time*!! To say that a man is in *captivity* to an enemy, and *free* from that enemy at the same time, is as palpable a contradiction as to say a man *is* and *is not* at the *same time*. Chap. vii. 19. For the *good* that I *would* I do not, but the *evil* that I *would not*, that *do* I. ver. 18. To *will* is present with me, but how to *perform* that which is *good* I find not. This he spoke, according to your comment, of himself, while under the influence of the spirit of liberty, after having received the *spirit of adoption*. Phil. iv. 13. *I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me*. The saints are said to be created in Christ Jesus unto *good works*, Eph. ii. 10. In the former text Paul saith, How to perform that which is *good*, I find not; in the latter, I can do all things. Can we suppose he meant those *evil* things which he hated? Did *Christ strengthen him to do evil*? Is it possible that he was such a bond slave to sin that he did nothing but evil, all the days of his life? If in chap. vii. 18. he spoke his invariable experience as a christian minister, he never performed that good which he *would*; but was always under the influence of an evil which his soul hated; and yet strange to tell, He *laboured*

more abundantly than they all—he travelled by sea and land to preach the everlasting gospel—he endured all things for the elect’s sake, that they might obtain salvation—he fasted and prayed, wrote and preached, endured stripes and imprisonments, suffered cold, hunger, and nakedness, joyed and rejoiced in Christ Jesus, abounded in the love of God—lived by faith in Christ Jesus, fought the good fight—and besides all, he had the care of all the churches.—And yet, if your interpretation be accurate, in the midst of all these sufferings and labours, he was under the tyrannical power of sin, willing to do good, but never doing it, hating evil, and always subject to it.—Did then the strong man keep the palace of St. Paul’s heart so closely, that it was beyond the power of Jesus Christ to bind him and cast him out?—Is not this representing Christ as being “vanquished, and flying before the conqueror?” *That which I do, I allow not.* John saith, *If our hearts condemn us, God is greater, and knoweth all things.*—Surely the great apostle to the gentiles must have been in a pitiable condition! A slave to sin, condemning himself, and of course condemned by the Lord—doing the evil which he hated—under captivity to the law of sin, although free from it—struggling against sin, but never able, although the omnipotent God was on his side, to overcome it—an enemy to God, under the influence of the carnal mind!! *He that is not for us is against us*, saith Christ. From your comment, therefore, Paul was working against the kingdom and interest of Christ.

Such sir, are the dreadful consequences resulting from your "view" of the seventh chapter to the Romans. There must be some capital error in that "scheme," which represents the holy, the diligent, and indefatigable Apostle in such a contemptible light. Nay, according to your own interpretation of the text, you make it appear, that Paul did not please God. P. 31. "By his flesh, he did not mean his animal nature."—"He says, that with the flesh he served the law of sin. In the next chapter he testifies, *They that are in the flesh cannot please God*; and then in an address to his christian brethren, he adds, *But ye are not in the flesh.*" Now, if by the flesh "he did not mean his animal nature," and if christians are *not in the flesh*, then it follows, that when Paul said, With the flesh he served the law of sin, he did not speak of himself as a *regenerated man*: or if he did speak of himself, he did not please God. From your own words, therefore, you are reduced to this dilemma, *Either to admit that you have given an erroneous interpretation of the text under consideration, or, that Paul never pleased God.* Error is always inconsistent with itself. Like the *serpent*, who was the first author of it, it takes a meandering course, often crossing its own tracks, until, by its intricate maze, it leads its advocates into inextricable dilemmas.

3. Having shewn the absurdity of your interpretation, it is proper to propose another in its place. We conceive then, that the Apostle Paul, in the seventh of Romans, designed, either to speak of his

own experience while under the law, or more indefinitely to personate any one under conviction for sin, and groaning for deliverance. This we judge from the context. The 5th and 6th verses contain the doctrine which the Apostle illustrates from ver. 7. of the 7th chapter, to ver. 4, of the 8th chapter, inclusive. Ver. 5. *For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.* This proposition he takes up at the 7th verse, and illustrates it in a very striking manner, by personifying a man coming to the knowledge of himself, and viewing the justice and holiness of the law which writes his condemnation. After having vindicated the righteousness of the law, and shewing its effects in detecting and exhibiting sin in ver. 7 and 8, he says, *I was alive without the law once, v. 9.* while ignorant of its length and breadth, of its spiritual nature and requirements, I thought myself a living, obedient servant to God. This is precisely the case with all unhumbled, pharisaical professors of religion. Being ignorant of the spirituality and holiness of the law, and consequently ignorant of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, they go about to establish a righteousness of their own, and do not submit to the righteousness of God. *But when the commandment came,* in its authoritative influence upon my conscience, by which spiritual light was diffused into the dark powers of my soul, so that I saw my native vileness, *sin revived,* it made a struggle for life, and *I died,* I found myself destitute of spiritual

union with God, ver. 10. *And the commandment which was intended for life, for living, active followers of God, as Adam was, previous to his transgression, and as all truly regenerated men are, I found to be unto death, to my polluted soul, it cutting asunder all my imaginary strings of spiritual life, and thus destroying all my towering hopes of happiness, ver. 11.* How coincident is this to the experience of all those who have been awaked from their delusive dream of happiness while under the power of sin, and yet ignorant of their stupid state. *For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, taking advantage of my ignorance of the nature and design of the law, deceived me, by making me think I was alive to God, while dead in sin; and by that deceit the law slew me, taking advantage of my weakness, it threw me almost into despair.* From this you will perceive that the law is holy, not deceitful, like *the law of sin, and the commandment, holy, just, dividing to every one their right, and good, perfectly answering its design, v. 12.* In verse 13, he shews that the law was not the *cause* of his death—*sin* was the cause; but the *law* operating upon his conscience, discovered his entire *separation* from God, that *sin* the *cause* of this separation, might become, or appear *exceeding sinful.* *For now all we who are in this awakened state, know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, yet in the flesh, and sold under sin, a perfect slave to its domineering influence, v. 14; so that, although I consent unto the law that it is good, I do not fulfil its precepts.* My enlightened

judgment does not approve of what I do ; and therefore *what I would, that do I not*. I would be free from this state of spiritual vassalage, but such is my weakness in my present unrenewed state, that I cannot. I would fulfil the requirements of the *holy law*, but I am incompetent. *But what I hate, that do I*.—I hate sin with a perfect hatred, yet I find the *motions of sins* work in my members, v. 15, 16. Is not this a most lively description of a true penitent, mourning on account of his blindness and hardness ; and yet consenting unto that very law which binds him ? What Christian can read this portion of scripture without calling to mind the days of his spiritual mourning, and his earnest desire for deliverance. *Now then it is no more I that do it*,—not that I do these things from the dictates of my enlightened judgment and reason ; *but sin*, which hath infused its poisoning influence through all my members, carries me whither I would not, v. 17. *For I know*, because God hath shown it me, by the agency of the Holy Spirit bringing the holy law home to my conscience, *that in me (that is in my flesh, my fallen depraved heart,) dwelleth no good thing*, naturally ; all the good light of truth I have is from above ; and all the good desires I now have for deliverance have been wrought in me by the eternal Spirit. In consequence of this depravity, although my judgment is so far convinced, that I have a *disposition to will* that which is good, yet *how to perform it I find not*, v. 18. *For the good that I would, I do not*—Inasmuch as I am convin-

ced of the just requirements of the law, *I would* fulfil them, *but I do not*, nor can I, on account of my present imbecility ; but this evil slavery in which I am held, causes me to murmur, a thing I hate, because it implies a complaint against God, v. 19. *Now if I do that which I would not, it is no more I—* in this particular I do not act according to the dictates of my enlightened judgment, but it is owing to the strong propelling power of sin, which dwells in my unrenewed heart, v. 20. There may be a time, when a soul is under the powerful awakenings of the Spirit of God, while sin reigns in the heart, and the strong tide of impurity rises in opposition to the flood of divine truth, that the penitent sinner is carried away, as it were, contrary to his wishes. Such may be his ignorance of the method of salvation by Jesus Christ, and his utter helplessness in consequence of the lapsed state of his soul, that, though he may feel a strong desire to be free from the domineering influence of sin, he cannot attain to it instantly, or as soon as he would. To this state of mind, it appears to me, the Apostle alludes in this passage. *I find then a law of sin in my members, bearing me away, that when I would do good, this evil law is nigh, even in my nature, and therefore prevents me, v. 21.* So far from consenting with my enlightened mind, to the tyrannical dominion of this enemy, *sin*, that *I take delight* in contemplating the purity and justice of the law of God, which is exceeding penetrating, extending even to the *inward man*—to the very secret desires

of the heart, v. 22. But notwithstanding this delight I take in *viewing* the law of God, and in anticipating my deliverance from its just sentence, I yet see *another law in my members, warring against this law of my mind*, the spiritual law of which my judgment approves—and *bringing me into captivity to the law of sin in my members*, v. 23. O wretched man that I am, to be thus captivated. Who shall deliver me from this body of death, which God's law has discovered to me, v. 24. Is not this the language of every penitent? Does he not groan under the heavy burden of spiritual death, and "pine for deliverance." I thank God, notwithstanding the law justly condemns me, I hope for deliverance through our Lord Jesus Christ, who came to redeem me from the curse of the law, being made a curse for me. So then, with the mind, with my "better judgment," I serve the law of God, I consent unto its precepts, that they are good; but still, until my deliverance comes, *with my flesh I serve the law of sin*,* v. 25. So far the Apostle illustrated the doctrine contained in the *fifth* verse.

* Although I have paraphrased the 25th verse, according to the sentiment conveyed in our translation, yet I very much doubt the accuracy of that translation. The reader is desired seriously to weigh the following translation and comment, which I borrow from Dr. Macknight. "*Do I myself then as a slave, serve with the mind the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin?*" Ἀρα οὐ αὐτὸς ἐγώ, &c. Here ἀρα (ara) is a particle of interrogation. This question is an inference from what the Apostle had said concerning his being delivered from the body of death, through Jesus Christ. Being delivered, *Do I myself*

4. *But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter*, v. 6. The deliverance spoken of in this

then as a slave serve with, &c. Translated in this manner, interrogatively, the passage contains a strong denial, that the person spoken of, after being delivered from the body of this death, any longer serves, as formerly, with the mind only, the law of God, and with the flesh the law of sin in his members. Whereas translated as in our English bible; *So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin*, it represents the delivered person as still continuing in that very slavery to sin, from which he says he was delivered by God, through Christ, and utterly overturns the inference drawn, chap. viii. 1. from what is said in this passage: *There is therefore now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit.* 2. *For the law of the spirit*, &c. But if those to whom there is no condemnation, *walk not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit*, it surely cannot be said of such in any sense that *with the flesh they serve the law of sin*; so that the common translation of ver. 25. is utterly wrong, and even dangerous." In support of this translation, Macknight cites to Matth. xviii. 1. saying, (Τίς ἀρα) *Who now is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?* and also Mark iv. 4. Τίς ἀρα εἶδος, *What manner of man is this?* In both of these places it is manifest that ἀρα (ara) is used interrogatively. The primitive meaning of the word ἀρα, is a curse.* So that if its appropriate meaning be insisted on, we might suppose the Apostle to say, *It is a curse to be in this wretched state, in which I myself must serve the law of the Spirit with my mind, and with the flesh the law of sin!* But certainly the Apostle did not design to insinuate that he himself, and all other Christians were under the curse, so long as they lived. Dr. Macknight's interpretation therefore, appears to be just and reasonable.

* See Rom. iii. 14.

verse, the Apostle explains more at large in the eighth chapter, *particularly* from the *first* to the *fourth* verse inclusive. *There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit, v. 1.*—The man under the law is said to be in the flesh; and in ch. vii. 5. it is said, *when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, &c.* In the latter part of that chapter, the Apostle thanked God for deliverance through Christ. So here he says there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ; such do not walk *after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* Behold the contrast! How great! Before, groaning under condemnation: Now, exulting in deliverance. Before, obeying the motions of sin: Now, governed by the law of the Spirit. It is not possible to describe two directly opposite characters in a more pointed manner.—May not every experimental Christian recognize his own experience in these words? Does he not with joy and gratitude recollect the happy moment when he was made free from sin, by the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus? *For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death, v. 2.* Here is the freedom, from *the motions of sins*, which were by the law, mentioned in ch. vii. 5. The law caused the motions of sin to rankle in the heart, and thereby shew its violent opposition to the holy law of God, but it could not deliver from sin. *For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his*

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own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, ver. 3. In these words the Apostle shews the superiority of the gospel dispensation over the law. Such is the *weakness* of human nature in its depraved state, that men cannot fulfil the requirements of the righteous law. To supply this defect, and to remedy this evil, God sent his Son, that sin might be destroyed; and that the *righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*—Now let any attentive mind, not biased by prejudice, nor swayed by a blind attachment to a particular creed, compare what is here said in the *eighth* chapter, with what is said in the *seventh*, and he will be convinced that the Apostle is describing totally different characters. You have no support, therefore, from the seventh of Romans, for you doctrine of “sinful imperfection.”

5. Having shewn, as I humbly trust, that Paul is misunderstood, when he is made to say of himself, while under the influence of pardoning and sanctifying grace, *I am carnal, sold under sin, &c.* I come to examine some of your other misinterpreted texts. You next quote a detached sentence from Phil. iii. 12. *Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect;* and suppose from this he had not “attained to sinless perfection,” p. 83. True, if by “sinless perfection” you mean his having *completed* his sufferings, or being as perfect as are the saints in heaven. To *all* this perfection we do not expect any one to attain in *this life*. That this

was the perfection to which he said he had not yet attained is evident from the context. This will appear from an impartial examination of the whole passage. *That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death, v. 10. If by any means I may ATTAIN unto the resurrection of the dead, v. 11. Not as though I had already ATTAINED* (unto the resurrection of the dead, which is the complete perfection of the saints in heaven,) *either were already perfect, in the fellowship of his sufferings, or perfectly conformed unto his death, because I have many things to suffer, even unto crucifixion, before I am perfect in sufferings, and before I can have the crown of martyrdom, after which I aspire. It appears the Apostle felt an holy ambition of soul to imitate his divine Master, who was made perfect through sufferings; and thus to be fully conformed to his death, that he might have a share in the first resurrection. O for this apostolic spirit! But to this he had not yet attained; and therefore neither had he arrived to that consummate perfection to which the martyrs shall arrive at their resurrection. Therefore he saith, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, (not resting in past experience or attainments) and reaching forth unto the things which are before, (the sufferings in the cause of Christ, which I perceive await me, and which I am eager to endure) I press toward the mark, for the prize (the high dignity of martyrdom) of the high*

calling of God in Christ Jesus. In the next verse, he strongly asserts the *perfection of his present attainments*, as a christian surrounded with infirmities, and exposed to temptations; but still pressing forward: not indeed the perfection of glorified saints, with which you unjustly accuse us: *Let us as many as be PERFECT, be thus minded.* Here the Apostle speaks of the same perfection as he did Rom. vi. 22, “But now being made *free from sin*, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto *holiness*, and the end everlasting life.”

6. P. 33. “It is stated, Gal. v. 17. as an experience common to all christians, that in them the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. The Apostle is writing to christians of different grades, those who brought forth thirty, and sixty, and an hundred fold; and yet he speaks of them all as sinfully defective.” So you assert, but without a shadow of proof. Let any man candidly examine the epistle to the Galatians, and he will be convinced that the Apostle addresses them as a *fallen* people; who had indeed *begun in the spirit, but now sought to be made perfect by the flesh*, Chap. iii. 3. The flesh, according to your definition, signifies, “The sinful, corrupt nature which we bring into the world with us.”—According to this, it would seem, that the Galatians, leaving the *pure* doctrines of the gospel, had fallen into your system, and expected to be made perfect by harbouring “indwelling sin;” for you labour hard in your fourth sermon to shew the great utility

of *sinful* imperfection, its happy tendency to promote humility, penitence, &c. See p. 88—93. To proceed—The Apostle calls them foolish. *O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, iii. 1. Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? ver. 3. Have ye suffered so many things in vain, if it be yet in vain, ver. 4.* Are such cutting reproofs common to all christians of every grade, who bring forth thirty, sixty, and an hundred fold? Do you suppose our Lord meant that those who received the good word of God, should bring forth, some *thirty fold* of foolishness, some *sixty fold* of witchcraft, and others an *hundred fold* of the works of the flesh! Such was the shameful apostacy of those people, that the apostle told them, chap. v. 4, *Ye are fallen from grace.* We see therefore, the reason of their present inability to do the *things they would.* They had departed from their first faith and love; and having cast away their spiritual armour, and being shorn of their spiritual strength, they were no longer able to withstand their enemies. They had in fact gone back to the law, and were again under its curse. It would seem, therefore, that the passage, *These are contrary one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things ye would,* expresses a similar sentiment to the one in Rom. vii. 18. *To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not.* And as the latter is not descriptive of an experienced father in Christ,

so neither is the former a just criterion, by which to judge of the doctrine of christian perfection.

7. Your next quotation is from 1 Kings viii. 46. *If they sin against thee, (for there is no man that sinneth not.)* “If there be any man who has arrived to a state of sinless perfection, then what is contained in this parenthesis would not be true.” p. 86. Here again you beat the air, by the phrase “sinless perfection,” which, from your account, your readers must suppose, that we believe means the same as the perfection of heaven. I would request the candid, christian reader to consult this text, with its connexion, for himself; and then say, if he can make any sense or meaning to Solomon’s prayer for the Lord to forgive his people when they returned and made supplication to him, on the supposition that they unavoidably *must* continue in that very sin all the days of their lives. The plain and obvious meaning of the wise man is, There are none but are *liable* to sin; and therefore, if thy people, who, with all others are thus *liable to sin*, should so far forget the dignity of their character as thine elect people, as to sin against thee; and in consequence of their sin, they should be carried into captivity, and in their distress should they repent of their sin, making supplication unto thee—then *hear thou in heaven, and forgive their rebellion.**—See 1 Kings viii. 46—50.

* “If you will consult the original, you will find that the word translated SINNETH, is in the future tense, which is often used for an *indefinite* tense in the *potential* mood, because

8. Prov. ix. 20. *Who can say, I have made my heart clean. I am pure from my sin?* “No one can say, I am the man, if the doctrine drawn from our text is true.” Granted—but the “doctrine drawn from” your text is *not true*; and therefore the Apostle Peter could say, “Seeing ye have *purified your souls* (ye who have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, ver. 18.) in *obeying the truth* through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a *pure heart*, (not an *impure heart*, full of pride, &c.) fervently, 1 Pet. i. 22. St. John also could say, “And every man that hath this hope in him (the hope of being like Christ, ver. 2.) *purifieth himself*, even as he is pure,” 1 John iii. 3. Now, sir, will you call *Peter* and *John* pharisees, hypocrites, blind, and “ministers of satan;” and say that you have not the “least mite of charity” for them, because they congratulated their brethren on their having *attained to purity of heart*? And is there no difference between being *pure in heart*, and being full of “indwelling sin?” When did our Lord say, Blessed are they whose

the Hebrews have no such mood or tense. Therefore our translators would only have done justice to the *original*, as well as to the context, if they had rendered the whole clause, *There is no man that MIGHT NOT SIN*, instead of *there is no man that SINNETH NOT*.” Fletcher’s Checks, vol. 6 p. 123, note. That a christian has *power* to sin, and therefore *may* sin is not disputed; and that they have *pomer not to sin* and therefore *may not sin*, is equally evident. And that Solomon meant to be understood in this sense, is manifest from his saying, *If thy people sin*, &c.

hearts are full of unbelief, pride, and impenitence, and whose lives are full of “sinful imperfection?” On the contrary, did he not say, *Blessed are the PURE in HEART, for they shall see God?* And among all the beatitudes mentioned Matt. v. 1—13. none are pronounced *blessed* on account of “indwelling sin.” When, therefore, you enumerate the great utility of “heart sin,” do you not bless that which the Lord abhors,—*Do not this abominable thing which my soul hateth.* If Solomon, in the above passage, meant, that none *had made themselves pure*, abstract from the Spirit of grace, and independent of the merits of Jesus Christ, as he unquestionably did, he spoke perfectly according to the evangelical purity for which the scriptures continually plead. To understand him otherwise, is to make him contradict the Psalmist David, his royal father, who said, *I am holy*, Jesus Christ, in his sermon on the mount, and Peter and John, in the passages already cited from their epistles.

9. As to *Job*, I would sooner believe him mistaken respecting himself, while groaning under a flood of afflictions, threatening to drown him in despair; and also while refuting the inconclusive arguments of his mistaken friends, who strove in vain to convict him of either “indwelling,” or out-breaking sin—I say, while in this afflictive situation, I should sooner believe he undervalued himself for once, when he said, *If I should say, I am perfect, it would prove me perverse*, than to disbelieve the testimony which the Almighty himself gives of

Job's character, when he calls him, *A perfect and upright man*, one that feareth God and escheweth evil, ch. i. 8. Not one that harboureth sin in his heart, where you suppose the sin of the believer principally dwells. But there is no necessity of supposing either of them mistaken. Job, no doubt, meant that he was not so perfect as to be free from afflictions, which he so sensibly felt. His mistaken friends endeavoured to convince him that his afflictions were a mark of God's displeasure, as he would not so chastise an innocent man. From these unjust accusations, Job vindicated himself in the most masterly manner, declaring *until I die, I will not let go mine integrity*. From the whole of his arguments in justification of himself, it is undeniably certain that he never meant to confess himself "sinfully imperfect," in your sense of the word. Moreover, it is expressly said at the conclusion of the account of his losses, *In all this did not Job sin with his lips*, chap. ii. 10. It appears therefore, that Job affords no proof of your doctrine for "sinful imperfection."

10. P. 87. 1 John i. 8. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* "In view of these two last passages, it seems strange that any should dare to say, that they are perfect in such a sense as to be sinless." And a little below you say, "The 4th question in the debate was to this amount, Do any in this life arrive to such a state of perfection as to live without sin?" This is not quite correct.—

The question stood thus—Do any in this life arrive to such a state of perfection as to keep the moral law.* To say that a man lives without sin, and leave it in this *indefinite* manner, has a tendency to misguide the hearer; because, as I have before stated, when a christian is viewed in relation to the Adamic law, he certainly sins; although when con-

* It is generally taken for granted, that it is impossible for christians to keep the moral law, or ten commandments. But this must be owing to inattention to the subject. What necessity is there for one whose heart is *purified* by faith, to worship any other God besides the God of heaven: to set his affections on the world, and thus be an idolater, or literally to bow down to images? What necessity is there to violate the *Sabbath*, by attending to secular concerns—to take the *name of God in vain*—to *dishonour father or mother*—to *kill*—to *commit adultery*—to *steal*—to *bear false witness*—to *covet* that which is not our *own*. An unconverted man may refrain from breaking any of these precepts in his external conduct. And when the heart is *changed by grace*, and *purified by the eternal Spirit*, the christian has an *internal* conformity to this law.—It would seem, moreover, that a *sanctified christian* must not only obey this law, but he must do more than the letter of the law requires—he must love his enemies, feed the poor, clothe the naked, &c. according to his ability. To say that never any one came up to these requirements, is saying more than can be proved. The grace of God is sufficient for all these things. The moral law is a rule of *justice*: but we are commanded to be merciful.—Go, said Christ, *and learn what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice*. If any contend that this is all *implied* in the moral law, I have no disposition to dispute them; because, be it so or not, christians are certainly required to love their enemies, &c. and therefore they are required to do more than the letter of that law enjoins.

sidered in relation to that under which the gospel dispensation places him, if he enjoy its privileges, he does not commit sin, agreeably to the language of scripture, *Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute sin.* The above passage, viewed with its context, will be found in perfect conformity to this sentiment. In the 7th verse he declared that the *blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.* To this, the Gnostics especially, (who held that all religion consisted in knowledge, and therefore if they attained to abstract knowledge, however vicious their lives, that were sufficient,) might object, and say they did not stand in need of this blood.—To refute this error, the Apostle observes, in ver. 8. *If we say that we have no sin,* that is, as he expresses it in ver. 10, *If we say we have not sinned, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* If we say this, that we never have so sinned, or are not at the present in such a sense sinners as to need the merits of Christ, we thereby set aside the great and prominent truth of the gospel respecting Christ's atoning merits. The argument of the Apostle appears to be this—Christ died for sinners; but if we were not sinners, if we have not sinned, there was no need of his death. Those therefore who assert that they have not sinned, do the same as to say Christ never died for them. That the Apostle never designed to declare the impossibility of a deliverance from sin in this life, is fully manifest from the 9th verse, *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all*

unrighteousness. Here the Apostle demolishes your doctrine of the necessity of sin in the heart, at a stroke, and strongly asserts the doctrine of holiness. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins*—here is pardon—and *to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*—here is the perfection for which we plead. How any one can take into consideration the leading design of the apostle, and then impartially examine the context, and yet suppose that he meant to support the doctrine of the necessary continuance of sin in the hearts of believers all the days of their lives, is difficult to conceive.

11. You add one “more passage,” p. 87. “It is James iii. 2. In many things we offend all.—*All* is the nominative to the verb *offend*. If this is true, then none are sinless.” Pray sir, have you any doubt of its truth? Letting this pass, I cannot but remark your method of quoting scripture, without paying any attention to what precedes, or what follows. By this injudicious method, we may make the inspired writers say any thing, however absurd. To take an insulated passage of scripture in this way, without considering the context, and without paying a proper regard to the particular design of the writer, is as unfair as to judge of a man’s goodness from the length of his prayers, or of his wisdom from the number of his sermons. If you had attended to these things, you never could have inferred that the apostle James designed to defend the doctrine of “indwelling sin.” *My brethren*, says he,

be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. For in many things we offend all, James iii. 1, 2. Who does not see that the Apostle designed to correct, or to prevent an abuse in the church, of their being many masters, of every one's dictating for himself and others ; and that, if this practice were not avoided, as it violated the established order of God, *we*, that is, those who followed that evil practice should receive the greater condemnation. Can we suppose that James meant to say, that all christians in every age must in this manner sin, by aspiring to be dictators ; and as a consequence, that *all must receive the greater condemnation !* If all are to receive the greater condemnation, what shall become of the elect, who you suppose were eternally justified in the mind of God. For in many things, we who act thus out of our place, *offend all, or all offend ;* for your grammatical criticism was quite unnecessary, as it does not alter, nor mend the sense any. That the Apostle did not mean to pass an indiscriminate censure upon all christians, is evident from what follows in ver. 2. *If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.* Here then he admits the possibility, and teaches the necessity of a man's not offending even in word, and who is therefore *a perfect man.* This text, therefore, is as little to your purpose as the former. From what has been said, we may conclude that your doctrine of "sinful imperfection" has no support in the sacred scriptures.

II. 1. Having thus cleared the way, by rescuing the sacred scriptures from the “unholy service (to borrow the words of an eminent author) into which they were pressed against their will,” I shall attempt to prove our doctrine of evangelical perfection, by an appeal to “unequivocal” texts of holy writ. And let it be remembered, that the point in debate is not whether we are as perfect in this life, as are the glorified spirits; nor whether we may be so perfect as to keep the Adamic law; but whether a *Christian* may arrive to such a state of perfection as to keep the gracious law under which the gospel of Christ places him, so as, in this sense to be delivered from sin. It ought furthermore to be observed, that no man since the introduction of moral evil into our world, is under the Adamic law, (which was a law of works) for justification and salvation. Neither is it a rule of life or of judgment: This point is so clear that it is needless to spend time to prove it. Taking it for granted, therefore, that we are under the *law of liberty*, established by Jesus Christ, I undertake to prove that a Christian, whose heart is thoroughly changed by the Spirit of God, does and must, in order to enter into life, keep it.

2. *But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Noah was a JUST man, and PERFECT in his generation, and Noah walked with God, Gen. vi. 8, 9. It may be asked, Why was Noah just and perfect? Because he found grace in the sight of God. It was not therefore from obedience to the Adamic,*

nor ceremonial law, that he was made perfect, but because he believed God, and faithfully improved the light of the dispensation of grace, under which he lived. He walked with God, like Enoch before him, who walked with God three hundred years, and did not *see death*, for God *translated him*; and before his translation, he had this testimony that he pleased God, Heb. xi. 5. If death be necessary to cleanse the heart from sin, and if none can enter heaven without being previously cleansed, what becomes of *Enoch*, who did not *see death*. Here is at least one exception to your doctrine—Is not the prophet Elijah another?

3. You have frequently alluded to Isaiah vi. 5. *Wo is me, &c.* If you had read on to the 7th verse, you would have discovered the doctrine for which we contend. *Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. And he laid it upon my mouth and said, Lo this hath touched thy lips; and thine INIQUITY IS TAKEN AWAY, and thy SIN IS PURGED.* Does not this text undeniably prove the doctrine of a deliverance from sin?—Equally in point are the words of the Psalmist, Psa. ciii. 12. *As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.* Observe that this is not spoken in anticipation of what shall be done at *death*; but it asserts what had already been accomplished.

4. Turn we our attention to the New-Testament writers. *What shall we say then, shall we CONTINUE*

in sin that grace may abound? God forbid: how shall we that are dead to sin, LIVE any longer therein? Rom. vi. 1, 2. How shall we that are dead to sin, consistently with that character we are called to support, as the servants of God, live any longer in sin!

V. 6. *Knowing this that our old man IS CRUCIFIED* (not shall be crucified at death) *with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. V. 7, For he that is dead is freed from sin. V. 11. Likewise reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. V. 12. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. V. 14. For SIN SHALL NOT HAVE DOMINION OVER YOU.* No language can be more express, to denote the total destruction of sin from the human heart. “Observe the confidence with which he speaks”—Knowing this—what? Why, *that the old man is crucified, that the body of sin might be destroyed—that they were freed from sin—that they should reckon themselves dead to sin—that sin should not have dominion over them.* How diametrically opposite were the sentiments of this holy Apostle, in regard to deliverance from sin, and your’s, sir, who so strenuously plead for its continuance through life! The man who can read the above passages of sacred scripture, and then deny the necessity and possibility of the destruction of sin from the heart in this life, may, with equal propriety, deny every doctrine of the Bible.

See also from ver. 18—22, in the last of which it is said, *But now being made FREE from SIN, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.*

5. The Apostle John bears testimony to the same truth, 1 John i; 6. *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness (to walk in sin is the same as to walk in darkness) we LIE, and do not the truth.* Do you not, sir, profess to have fellowship with Jesus Christ? and do you not also profess to live in sin every moment? In which particular are you mistaken? You think you ought not to have the “least mite of charity” for a Christian who professes to be delivered from sin! How different the judgment of St. John. It would seem that he had so little charity for those professors of his day, who said they had fellowship with God, and yet walked in darkness, that with his apostolic plainness, he called them *liars*. V. 7. *But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from ALL SIN.* How much sin is there left when *all* is taken away? And it ought to be observed that the Apostle does not speak of a *future* cleansing, but the blood of Christ *now* cleanseth. Ch. iii. 8. *He that committeth sin is of the Devil; for the Devil sinneth from the beginning.* If your doctrine be true, that all must “always sin in thought, word, and deed,” then, according to John, all are children of the Devil. Who represents Christ as “vanquished” now? *For this purpose the Son of*

God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Will you say, that the *very purpose* for which the Son of God was manifested, shall not be accomplished? He came, according to the language of the Apostle Paul, *to redeem us from ALL INIQUITY, and to purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* If therefore none are *purified*, if none are redeemed from *all iniquity* in this life, the benevolent design for which the Lord Jesus came into the world is not answered. And is it not highly dishonourable to God, to suppose that the express *design* for which he gave his Son; and equally dishonourable to the Son who came to accomplish the same *end*, to say that this desirable end is not, in any instance, obtained?

6. I conceive it unnecessary to multiply quotations of scripture on a point so amply proved by the most express declarations of God's word, and therefore cannot be disputed with any prospect of success. It seems proper, however, to notice your comment on the words of St. John; *Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.* On this text you observe, p. 97. "If it prove any thing, it proves too much." True—it proves too much for your system, seeing it proves in perfect coincidence with the preceding texts I have quoted, that those who live in sin, are the children of the devil, for *he that is born of God doth not commit sin.* Rightly understood, it proves precisely what we contend for; that those who are heirs of God, *cannot*, consistently with their high birth,

holy calling, and dignified character, debase themselves by sinning. Not that they have no *power* to sin ; but are under prior, and stronger obligations to God, originating from their relation to him as his children ; and consistently with these obligations, they cannot sin. Like Joseph they say, when solicited to sin, *How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God !* You seem puzzled with this text—and after an unsuccessful effort to remove it out of the way of your doctrine, you at length give up the point, and set your seal to the scriptural doctrine for which we contend. “ The Apostle means to say, that he who has a new and *holy heart*, will have a new and *holy life*—and that the man who is a *committer of sin*, in distinction of being an obedient follower of Christ, is not born of God : for if he was born of God, the new and holy nature which abides in the christian, would prevent his living in sin,” p. 97. Does he indeed “ mean to say” this ? Then he “ means to say” directly the reverse from what you “ mean to say,” throughout the whole of your fourth sermon, in which you “ attempt” to prove that all christians “ always sin, in word, thought, and deed ;” and therefore “ he means” to oppose your *unholy* doctrine of “ sinful imperfection.” The strong current of truth will carry you away sometimes, I suppose, however, where you *would not*.

7. But perhaps you “ mean to say,” that although the scriptures speak of being delivered from sin, they do not speak of our fulfilling the law. Let us attend to their voice, and we shall hear them say,

All the law is fulfilled in one word, namely, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. That the righteousness of the LAW might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, Rom. viii. 4. Whosoever looketh into the perfect LAW of liberty, and CONTINUETH therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a DOER of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed, Jam. i. 25. Blessed are they that DO his COMMANDMENTS, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city, Rev. xxii. 14. Do not these texts of holy scripture incontestibly prove both the necessity and possibility of having the righteousness of the law fulfilled in us, of our continuing in the law of liberty, and of doing the commandments of God, that we may enter into life? No art of sophistry can possibly set aside such plain and pointed testimony. Permit me to add one more witness. It is John, chap. ii. 4. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. What an enemy to sin was this holy apostle! How pointedly does he rebuke the Gnostics of his day, whose doctrines were, (according to the opinion of some respectable Presbyterian ministers in New-York,) like the sentiments of the Hopkinsians, productive of infidelity. Hear the*

* To prove the above assertion, I will insert the following extracts from some letters to the Rev. Ezra Stiles Ely, designed as recommendations of his book, entitled, "Contrast between Calvinism and Hopkinsianism."

same apostle once more in chap. iii. 22. "And whatsoever we ask we receive of him, *because we*

"The basis of their argumentation is the same with that of the necessitarian philosophers in France and Germany.— And I am persuaded that these profound divines are preparing the way for a more extensive diffusion of infidel principles, and even of atheism in our country. I wish your book might be generally and seriously read, and the sentiments it exposes duly appreciated." The letter from which this extract is taken, is subscribed by "*Samuel S. Smith,*" D. D. L. L. D, &c.

—"He has arranged, under the term Hopkinsianism, certain sentiments, which appear to us, not only inconsistent with the standards of the Presbyterian churches, but also at war with the philosophy of the human mind, with common sense, and with the word of the living God. Such sentiments, in whatever connexion they may be taught, by whatever names they may be recommended, ought to be exposed and reprobated in the most decided manner." This is signed by no less than *ten* ministers of the Presbyterian, and Dutch Reformed orders.

"Dear Sir,

"By professing the Christian faith, the Gnostics came into the bosom of the primitive church, and for the space of three centuries disturbed her tranquility, and obstructed the progress of the gospel. They combined the oriental science with the Platonic system of "*being in general,*" of "*abstract beauty,*" "disinterested love;" and the "best of all possible worlds;" of which they had not any correct idea themselves; and attempted to blend their heterogenous principles with revealed religion, and accommodated the pure, simple, and sublime doctrines of the Son of God, to the tenets of their contemptible philosophy. They spoke of the Most High with a familiar and disgusting irreverence; and deduced consequences from the premises they had adopted, which were shocking and impious, and which tended not only to render the scriptures unintelligible, but Christianity itself incredible and detestable.

keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." If you will allow the testi-

"In the course of the last century, the system of the *best world* was revived and polished in Germany, with all the advantages that genius and erudition could afford, by the celebrated Leibnitz and Baron Wolf. Their *mundus optimus*" (best world) "with its collateral inferences, was received and applauded through all the protestant churches of continental Europe. It was considered as the test of true science, and the highest improvement of the intellectual system.—But what is the result? What has been the consequence?—By that very philosophy, the public mind became imperceptibly alienated from the authority of scripture, and the simplicity of the gospel; and that system has evidently co-operated in opening a passage for the flood of infidelity, which, at this day has overwhelmed those European churches. There is no new thing under the sun. The same causes will every where produce the same effects. Errors are insidious and subtle; slow and silent, at first, in their progress, but sure of success if undetected. They always eat as doth a canker.

"To what philosophy, instead of the Bible, they have submitted, or to what family they are related, whose doctrines you have exhibited in your CONTRAST, I do not know"—

"If it be the duty of all the Lord's people to contend earnestly for the faith, and to be jealous lest their minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ; it is especially incumbent upon those who are set for the defence of the gospel, and stand as watchmen upon the walls of Zion, to descry approaching danger, and give a speedy warning; and should an angel from heaven preach any other gospel, to denounce and resist him." This is subscribed by "J. H. Livingston," D. D. and S. T. R.

Infidelity looks with contempt upon the scriptures. It declares them useless; and professes to frown upon them because they are contradictory. Does not Hopkinsianism su-

mony of scripture sufficient to put any controverted point at rest, I think the question in debate is fully decided in the affirmative.

persede the necessity of the sacred Scripture, by asserting that all things are produced by God himself. If man be governed by a secret, irresistible influence, in all his words and actions, according to the Hopkinsian dogmas, the directions contained in the Bible are totally useless. If the President of the United States had such controlling influence over the souls and bodies of all its citizens as to turn them, according to his own pleasure; and if he determined to execute his invisible authority in all cases; what necessity is there of convening *Congress*, to establish laws and regulations; why appoint magistrates to execute them? This would be only a sham, a mere external show to impose upon the ignorant multitude. And if Almighty God govern mankind in this secret way, why publish laws to regulate their conduct? Is not this imputing a "holy simulation" to God. And if the human mind can be so infatuated by the illusions of error, as to form such an idea of God's sacred character. of that Being, which the scriptures unfold, as the object of our worship, it will require but one step more to leap into all the horrors of atheism. For who would not choose to believe in *no God*, rather than to acknowledge one who *deceives* the creatures he has made, who *impels* them to *sin*, while he makes them believe they are *free*—who ordains all the sins of their lives, and then sends them to hell for those identical acts, which are perfectly pleasing to him? Who *forbids* what he *decrees*, and *decrees* what he *forbids*? Who *abhors* what he has *decreed*, and is *pleased* with what he *abhors*? These absurdities and contradictions are legitimate offsprings of Hopkinsianism—not remotely deduced from its premises, but explicitly declared by Mr. Williston himself. See Letter 1st and 3d.

"All the sins in the universe were decreed," p. 18. "The Supreme Being"—is not "an approver of sin," p. 23. "Nothing could be more abhorrent to his nature, or farther from his

8. Do you ask for examples? I will produce a few. "And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, O that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest *keep me* from evil, that it may not grieve me! AND GOD GRANTED him that which he REQUESTED," 1 Chron. iv. 10. On these words we notice, 1. That Jabez prayed that God would keep him *from evil*. 2. God granted him his request. Here then is one person who was kept, even in this life, from evil. Hear the testimony which the Lord gives of Abraham; "For I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they *shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment*," Gen. xviii. 19. God also testifies respecting *Zachariah and Elizabeth*, that "*They were both righteous before God, walking in ALL the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless*." You intimate that it is impossible for any one to be *blameless*. Which shall we believe, you sir, or St. Luke, who wrote

thoughts," than to cause the Jews to make their children to pass through the fire to Moloch, p. 22. "God brings every thing to pass which is brought to pass," p. 1. "God is the efficient cause of sin," p. 23. "The divine constitution" secures sin in the hearts of believers as long as they live, p. 90. "It is undoubtedly the duty of all creatures to be free from sin, and that without the least delay," p. 96. It is our duty therefore to oppose the divine constitution! "The purpose of God"—"most evidently, contrary to his command," p. 7.

May such contradictory assertions be exposed to the abhorring of all flesh,

by inspiration of God? *Zacharias* and *Elizabeth* fulfilled what the Apostle Peter exhorted christians to do; “Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without *spot* and *blameless*, 2 Pet. iii. 14. So also it is said of *Nathanael*, *Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile*. From these examples, it appears evident that the precepts of the law are not merely designed to convict people of sin, (although this is one end of them) but that they are also designed for christians to *keep*; and that it is possible to keep them.

9. That it is strictly proper to call christians *perfect*, is abundantly manifest from the numerous passages of scripture which speak of their perfection. Those who object to its propriety, do not consider, perhaps, that they thereby impeach the wisdom of God, who has so frequently denominated his servants perfect. I have already explained in what sense we are to understand the word when applied to christians, to which the reader is referred. That you may be convinced of its propriety, I will refer you to some of those passages where it is used.—Noah was a just man and *perfect*, Gen. vi. 9. Mark the *perfect* man, Ps. xxxvii. 37. A *perfect* man and upright, &c. Job i. 1. Be ye therefore *perfect*, &c. Matth. v. 48. Thou wilt keep him in *perfect* peace, Isa. xxvi. 3. Be *perfect*, &c. 2 Cor. xiii. 11. We speak wisdom to them that be *perfect*, 1 Cor. ii. 6. That I may present every man *perfect* in Christ Jesus, Col. i. 28. Let us as many as be

perfect be thus minded, Phil. iii. 15. That ye may stand *perfect* and *complete* in the will of God, Col. iv. 12. *Perfect* love casteth out fear, John iv. 18. But whoso *keepeth his word*, in him verily is the love of God *perfected*, ii. 5. Let us go on to *perfection*, &c. Heb. vi. 1. These are sufficient, (and many more might be added*) to convince any impartial man that we are fully justified in using the phrase, if we use it in the sense which the holy scriptures authorize.

10. You will, without doubt, acknowledge that conviction, justification and sanctification, are all the work of God. And Moses saith, *His work is perfect*, Deut. xxxiii. 4. When therefore a sinner is convicted, justified and sanctified, he is *perfectly* convicted, justified and sanctified; for all the *works of God are perfect*. Any thing is perfect, which answers its END. Thus when God finished his work of creation, he pronounced it all *very good*, that is, *perfect*; because each and every part was fitted for the place it was designed to occupy, and to discharge the duties resulting from its relative situation. When souls are born into the kingdom of God, they are said to be *created anew unto good works, which God ordained that ye should walk in them*. To say therefore that adult christians do not

* The word *predestinate* occurs but four times in all the scriptures, and the word *predestination* not once.—Not so the word *perfection*; it occurs, with its derivatives, as frequently as most words in the scripture; and not seldom in the very same sense in which we take it." Checks. vol. 6. p. 15.

walk in good works, but in sin, is to pronounce them *imperfect*; and to pronounce them in this sense imperfect, is to say that God's work is *defective*—that he has not so wrought believers, as to answer the *end* of their new creation. Again; the end for which Christ died for us is, *That he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*. This then is the *end*, the manifest *design* of God in the work of redemption and salvation. To accomplish this *end*, and fit man for this *design*, God works in the hearts of those who believe in Jesus Christ. To say, therefore, that obedient believers are not redeemed from all iniquity, and purified from all sin, “properly so called,” is to say that the gracious design of God is frustrated, even towards those who are given to Christ. And that the Apostle in the above passage spoke of being *redeemed from all iniquity in this life*, is undeniably certain, from his adding, *a peculiar people zealous of good works*; unless you absurdly suppose that he meant they should not be *zealous of good works* until after death.—Now, as it is impious to insinuate that the *perfect work of God* is *defective*, that his benevolent designs to the world never take effect, so it is absurd to say that believers are not saved from sin. If indeed we were left to ourselves in the work of salvation, we might well despair of an exemption from the curse of the law, and an emancipation from the thralldom of sin. But when we take into consideration, that he who is omnipotent in *power* and un-

bounded in wisdom and goodness, has undertaken to accomplish this glorious and desirable work, all our fears of its *complete* accomplishment are dissipated. He who worketh in us to *will* and to *do* of his own *good pleasure*, is fully able and abundantly willing to work in us *perfect* faith and love, *perfect* humility and patience, *perfect* meekness and temperance, goodness and forbearance, which are some of the perfect graces which adorn the soul of a christian. *Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it*, says Paul, 1 Thess. v. 24.

III. 1. In the third place it seems necessary to notice some of the arguments by which you attempt to show the great utility of sin. I cannot help, however, noticing that, in the catalogue of Old Testament saints you have mentioned, *Abraham* is brought forward, of whom you say, his “faith was mixed with unbelief,” which led him among others, in some instances to depart from the living God, p. 84.—whereas Paul saith, *Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness—And being not weak in faith—He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was STRONG in FAITH, giving glory to God*, Rom. iv. 3, 19, 20.—Is it not rather bold so flatly to contradict the lips of inspiration! But you say these holy men “in some instances departed from the living God.” And suppose it were granted, you would gain nothing by the concession in support of your doctrine; for you earnestly contend that *every christian commits sin*

every moment of his life! Nay, you go so far as to say to your audience, that they never were so “guilty and ill-deserving, as you are this moment. You have increased your ill-desert since you came into the house of God, and since you began to hear this sermon,” p. 99. And for my part, I am disposed to think you told them the truth; for how a man with the Bible before him, can preach such unscriptural doctrine; and how those who have been enlightened by the Spirit of truth, can embrace it without being “guilty” of shutting their eyes against the light of truth, is difficult to conceive.—Be this, however, as it may, allowing that many of the ancient saints *sometimes* deviated from perfect rectitude, it no more proves your point, that every *sincere christian always* departs from the living God, than it does that the sun is *always* eclipsed, because sometimes the moon intercepts its luminous rays.—To have established your doctrine, you should have proved that every saint “always sinned in thought, word, and deed.” But this you never can do.—What think you of *Daniel*, who was a man *greatly beloved*. No *spots*, that I recollect, appear in his character!—of *Isaiah*, after the Angel testified of him, *thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged?*—of *Jeremiah*, and many others that might be mentioned among that list of worthies, whose holy characters are exhibited by the Apostle in the 11th of Hebrews? But from what different motives does he celebrate these saints? He presents them as examples of faith and patience, of holy courage

and fortitude; but you, sir, expose them for the purpose of shewing their spots of impurity; and after all you have said, they will forever shine in the page of sacred biography, as saints, who, although *some* of them at “some times” suffered an eclipse of their luminous faith and hope, were, by far the greatest number of their days, eminent examples of the most undeviating constancy in the service of God. What think you also of *John the Baptist*? Did he ever tarnish the glory of his character, as one of the *greatest of Prophets*? Of *James* and *John*; of *Paul* after his extraordinary conversion? Have we any account that they “always ran away from God?” And although *Peter* sinned by denying his Lord, and afterward by dissimulation, I think it would be difficult to prove that he *always* sinned. You have no authority therefore from the example of either the Old or New Testament saints to conclude that every one must live in sin all his life. It ought to be carefully noted that this is the point you are to prove. The moment you acknowledge that a christian may live a day without sinning, you give up the point. For the same gracious power which keeps a soul one day is able to keep it a year, or twenty years. We acknowledge that some of the saints sometimes sinned; and that all, the best not excepted, are *liable* to sin. Liability, however, does not imply *necessity*.

2. P. 88. “The present plan is calculated to make the saints eternally more penitent, humble, thankful, and every way meet for their heavenly in-

heritance.”* P. 89. “There are two things which are calculated to make creatures feel the reverse of pride and self-sufficiency ; or in other words, to feel humble ;” and a few lines above you seem to think humility is greatly promoted by this plan which insures sin in the hearts of saints ; and in page 102, you think he makes a “thousand deviations,” “especially as it respects the exercises of his heart.” Is it not very extraordinary that *pride* should promote *humility*—that *hardness of heart*, should promote *penitence*--that *self-sufficiency* should make us feel our *dependence*—that *unbelief* should strengthen *faith*—and that *worldly-mindedness* should promote *spiritual-mindedness*? Is it not much more scriptural and rational to conclude that, when grace has effected a “radical change” in the heart, by which *pride*, *anger*, &c. is exterminated, and the heart is filled with perfect love, that the christian will be more likely to be *humble*, *meek*, and constant in *faith*, than if his heart were filled with pride, anger, &c? To shew the absurdity of

* P. 111. “The penitent sinner goes to Christ to be saved from all his sins ; to be redeemed from all iniquity ; and Christ undertakes as a Saviour and Redeemer to perfect this most desirable deliverance.” Does he indeed? And yet never accomplishes what he thus undertakes! At least not in this life. And why? Not because the penitent sinner is not faithful. This, according to your doctrines, has nothing to do in the case. Is it then for want of *power* or *goodness*? Is it not a mark of *folly* or imbecility to undertake what cannot be accomplished? And does not your doctrine attribute this weakness to Jesus Christ?

your unscriptural ideas on this subject, I will reduce them to a sylogistical form. A man must be *penitent, humble and meek* to be fit for heaven; but *pride, anger, and hardness of heart*, promotes *humility, meekness, and penitence*; therefore a man must be *proud, angry, and hard-hearted*, to be fitted for heaven! On the same mode of reasoning which you have adopted, it might be proved that *unclean-ness* promotes *cleanness*, that *debauchery* promotes *chastity*! Was not then David more “meetened for” heaven in the bed of adultery than whilst composing his penitential Psalms? O christianity! how is thy immaculate purity tarnished, and thy superlative excellence clouded by the systems of errors with which thou art shrouded, by thy mistaken friends!

3. In page 89, you suppose that the “spiritual Canaanites” are a means of shewing us our sinfulness, and of keeping “pride from entering heaven.” What are “spiritual Canaanites?” Is not pride one of them? Must a man harbour *pride* for the purpose of expelling pride? Are not *anger, blindness of mind, and self-will* some of them? And will *anger* expel *anger*, *blindness of mind* make one see himself, and *self-will* make a person *yielding*?—If these evil passions will work their own ruin, why do you suppose death necessary to perfect the work? Is not this substituting another *name* by which we can be saved, in the room of the *name of Jesus*? If pride will destroy pride, and self-will destroy stubbornness, then there is no necessity for

the Holy Spirit to apply the merits of Christ to effect their destruction ! To what a monstrous absurdity does error conduct us ! Christ said, *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart.* But according to your doctrine, we are to learn of pride to be humble, and of anger to be meek. The Apostle saith, *In thy light we see light.* You say that the “spiritual Canaanites” will give “a more exquisite sense of their sinfulness;” but it was a view of *Jehovah* which caused Isaiah to cry out, *I am a man of unclean lips,* and which made Job *abhor himself and repent in dust and ashes.*—And it was a sight of Jesus Christ which made Peter say, with deep humiliation, *Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.* We know that the *less* grace a man has, the more blind, self-conceited, and arrogant he is ; and nothing short of the energies of the eternal Spirit applying the merits of Christ, can exterminate these “spiritual Canaanites” from the heart. You might as well teach your *gardener* to take special care not to pluck up the noxious weeds by the roots, but only lop off the branches, that your garden might be clear of weeds, as to tell believers that the root of sin must remain, especially as it respects the exercises of the heart, that thereby humility and meekness may be promoted. The mean of *humility*, according to your doctrine, is pride ; and from this pride the believer cannot be delivered in this life. Your mean, sir, defeats the end. Is not pride and humility directly opposite ? And can a man be humble, and proud at the same

time? Can a man attain to humility by a vice which is totally subversive of it. Exquisite logic!

3. Moreover, two parts of your system oppose each other, therefore they must ultimately destroy one another. The new birth, you very justly observe, is a “radical change.” I have before observed that the word *radical*, comes from the Latin, *radix*—root. The new birth therefore, according to your definition of it, signifies a change at the root, seat, or foundation of the affections; and yet in your defence of sin, you say, p. 102, that the believer, one who has experienced this change at the root, “sees a thousand deviations from that perfect rule given in the scriptures, especially as it respects the heart.” The heart then, it seems, which has been radically changed by the *spirit of holiness*, is nevertheless, the *root, seat, or foundation* of the noxious seeds of sin, from whence sprout *pride, hardness, unbelief, and blindness of mind, &c.* How diametrically opposite is this doctrine of yours from our Lord’s, Luke vi. 45. “*A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is evil.*” If you should be disposed to preach a sermon on these words, you might prove the doctrine contained in them by a parallel text in Matt. vii. 16—20, in one of which verses it is said, in direct opposition to your doctrine, “*A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit.*” But it is not very surprising, that a man who can assert that all things, *good and bad*, proceed

from God, as their *efficient cause*, should also, in the profundity of his wisdom, or in the vortex of confusion, assert that an *heart radically good* should be productive of actions *essentially bad*. But Jeremiah will contradict the former sentiment, as pointedly as Jesus Christ has done the latter in the above texts.—*Out of the mouth of the Most High proceedeth not evil and good*, Lam. iii. 38.

4. But lest my readers should think I misrepresent you, I will here quote some lines you have written in p. 90 and 91. After endeavouring to shew the benefit of sin to believers, you add,—“They cannot but admire the patience which bears with so much pride, self-seeking, worldly-mindedness, impenitence, hardness of heart, unbelief, ingratitude and disobedience, as have been found in them, since they have been by his grace, called out of darkness into marvellous light!” And let it be observed that you plead for these evil fruits, because they are designed of God to promote the opposite virtues. O what dangerous sentiments you have advanced. Let us do evil that good may come. Let us be proud, may all who believe your doctrine say, that humility may come. And if indulging internal evils is so beneficial, why not external ones? Why may not the drunkard say, I will be drunk that sobriety may be promoted? and so of all other vices. These are legitimate inferences from your doctrine. Permit me, dear sir, to throw myself at your feet for a moment, and beg of you for virtue’s sake, for the sake of honesty and chastity, for the sake of humil-

ity and meekness, and above all for Christ's sake, who came to destroy the works of the devil, not to preach such doctrine any more, lest some take the liberty it gives them, and undertake to exemplify in their lives, what they profess to believe in their hearts. Review the subject for a moment; and see if there be not a possibility of your being mistaken in your view of things. I hope you are not too tenacious to recant, if you can be convinced of your error. May the Father of lights pity our frailties, and forgive our errors.

5. P. 91. "The strength of indwelling sin in the saints, makes way for richer displays of the power of Christ."—and also, "of the *truth* and *faithfulness* of the Redeemer." This flimsy argument has deceived thousands. A simple illustration will shew its fallacy. A sick man sends for a *physician*, who informs his patient, that his disorder is dangerous; "and although I do not like," says he, "to deal in technical terms to plain people who do not understand them, I must tell you that a *radical* cure must be effected. This is done the moment my medicine is taken. You will grow no better 'by degrees,' even should you be forty-nine degrees nearer perfect health than you now are, (see p. 40, of your book) but will remain *totally* sick 'up to the moment' of your 'radical change,' which will be the moment you swallow my sovereign dose.—Although you will be 'radically changed' from *total sickness* to perfect health, yet your disease is so seated, and so inveterate withal, that I cannot en-

tirely cure you without endangering your life! Do not be surprised at what I say—you must know that my *power, truth, and faithfulness* will not be displayed in your restoration to health, unless I continually administer my *emetics and cordials*. If you should be restored to perfect health, you would not be thankful to me for my *skill, power, and goodness*, as a physician; therefore to keep up a perpetual remembrance in your mind of my *faithfulness and truth*, I shall leave you to grapple with a violent pain in your head, and a little mortification upon your heart, which, although ‘radically’ cured, is yet the *root* or seat of your disorder, and this will preserve some spots upon your face as symptoms of your disease. This *pain* in your head will promote *ease*, and the *mortification* at the heart will gradually promote *soundness*! I have, however, an old enemy which my medicines are *intended* to guard you against, who will by and by put a final termination to your complaint. Although an *enemy*, I use him as a faithful servant to aid me in difficult cases—he is called death.” At this word methinks the poor patient turns *pale*, and with trembling lips, says, “Through the violence of my disorder I may not think accurately, but I thought you were to perform a *radical cure*. If you would be so kind as to fulfil this *promise*, I should have the fullest confidence in your *truth* and *faithfulness*, which, according to my judgment, are displayed in fulfilling one’s promise. But perhaps, as you are but a man, you lack power—I therefore will try to excuse

you, especially as my head is considerably affected, I may not reason accurately." "That is it," rejoins the physician—"your disorder unfits you for reasoning. My *truth* and *faithfulness* are not accomplished so much in the fulfilment of my promise, as in the exercise of your *patience*, (although you must, among other evils, have much *impatience*) under a disease which you must be content to bear these twenty years, for aught I know. As to my *power*, it is fully adequate to all I *will*; and my *will* is to use it in checking your disorder as it rages, and not in removing its *cause*." "But if death is to rid me of these tremendous pains, why not let my disorder rage, that I may the sooner be delivered from suffering?" "O, I must have an opportunity of shewing my skill in effecting *radical* and *instantaneous* cures, by keeping my patients a *long time*, *progressing* toward a final cure. 'True, there are some who have taken my remedies, who pretend to be restored to perfect health. But they are deceived. They were never sensible of their disease: if they had been, they would have known it impossible to have it perfectly removed while they live; besides, they reproach my character, by saying I am *able* and *willing* to restore to sound health. I have, however, an old friend who pleads my cause against these deluded souls. He asserts that I have effected *radical cures* in an *instant*; but you must know that he asserts this, while he is proving that my patients were once *totally* sick, in opposition to some ignoramuses, who say that *before* a man

dies there is some *life*. But as these same ignorant enthusiasts teach that, inasmuch as I am a *perfect* physician, I perform perfect cures, this old counsellor of mine comes forward, and roundly asserts that all my patients remain *radically sick* while they live, if I rightly understand him, when he says, they have much sickness, ‘especially as it respects the exercises of the heart.’ Although there is a manifest contradiction in asserting that a man is *radically changed* from sickness to health, and yet that, ‘especially as it respects the heart,’ there is much sickness remaining, you must not, on that account, question the truth of these contradictory propositions, because that would strengthen the hands of his antagonists, who are continually teasing him about such jarring assertions. You must believe them both true, because they are brought to oppose opposite errors. The one error is, that until a man is *totally dead* there is some *life* remaining; the other is, that my skill, truth, and faithfulness are more fully displayed in accomplishing my promise and restoring to perfect health, than it is in keeping my patients alive for a long time exercised under pains and mortifications. These two errors are so perfectly hateful to me, that I think if my wise counsellor can but confute them, he may be allowed to contradict himself a little.” I leave the reader to make the application of this simile for himself; it being evident that the *truth* and faithfulness of the Lord Jesus is more *perfectly* displayed in perfectly delivering his people from sin, according to his

promise ; and his power is more fully demonstrated in preserving them from sin and all their other deadly foes, than it would be in keeping “ sin in *their hearts*, by a *positive, creative influence*.”

6. The inference from what has been said is, that they who live in the habitual commission of sin, as you think the best of Christians do, and at the same time profess to be Christians, are deceiving themselves. “ We are taught by the current of scripture,” that he who *committeth sin is of the devil* : for the devil sinneth from the beginning.— “ From the scriptures we also learn” that the saints are holy, that they *being made free from sin, and become servants to God, have their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life*. “ The Apostle John thinks that this is sufficient proof against the genuineness of any man’s religion,” for them to say that they every moment depart from the living God, when he said, *He that doth righteousness is righteous even as he is righteous—He that is born of God doth not commit sin*. “ We may therefore, with the bible before us, as easily perceive” that if a man is not mistaken when he professes to be full of indwelling sin, he is “ assuredly in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity,” “ as Peter perceived that this was the state of Simon the sorcerer, when he sought by money to purchase the power of giving the Holy Ghost.” “ We cannot, we believe we ought not to entertain the least mite of charity for that man, (however apparently pious he is,) who shall say, that for years, or months, or weeks, or

days, he has lived in such an” unholy manner, that he discovers his *heart* full of *indwelling sin*, and from which unholy fountain issues the streams of *pride, vain-glory, and impenitence, &c.* which you say dwells in the hearts of all believers, and are productive of *humility, lowliness, and penitence!* I speak not these things from any enmity to those persons who espouse the doctrines I oppose, “but from a regard to truth, and a tender concern for the salvation of that generation who fancy themselves the *elect of God*, and who according to their own confession, are under the power of sin every moment; and therefore however “pure” they may be “in their own eyes,” is not washed from their filthiness. See your fourth Sermon, p. 93, 94.

7. The scriptures say, *The soul that sinneth shall die.* Now, according to your doctrine, the best of men sin every moment. Those therefore who profess the religion of the Lord Jesus, and think they are in the way to life, and who nevertheless live in sin, are deceiving themselves, for *He that committh sin is of the devil—If ye die in your sins, where I am ye cannot come.* What more can be implied in being in the *gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity*, than being under the perpetual influence of *indwelling sin*, and “always sinning in deed, word and thought?” If therefore the professions of such persons are true and honest, if *they are what they profess to be*, then are they servants to the devil, and in the high road to destruction! I do not say, sir, that this is really the case with all those who pro-

less faith in your unholy doctrine. It is possible many of them are deceived by the illusions of error ; and it is also possible for the understanding to be wrongly informed, while the heart is seasoned with grace.

8. P. 96. " When God commands us to be perfect, we are to understand the word in the most unlimited meaning." Is not this a mistake ? I thought God alone is unlimitedly perfect. But do you suppose God commands us to be as completely perfect as himself : " Because it is the duty of all creatures to be free from sin, and that without the least delay." And does it follow, that, because it is our duty to be free from *sin*, we must also be omnipotent, *infinite* in wisdom, power and goodness, as well as omniscient. A wondrous argument ! It is, you say, our duty to be free from sin without delay, and yet no man can in this life. The wise constitution of God, if we believe your doctrine, insures sin in the hearts and lives of all believers so long as they live. This then is God's appointment. Is it our duty to *oppose* this appointment of God ? So you assert—It is our duty to be free from sin, although God has appointed otherwise ! The line of duty then is not marked by God's appointment.—Such inconsistencies are, I believe, *peculiar* to your " New Divinity."

9. P. 100. " As they are always sinning in deed, word and thought." P. 101. " Sinning is not the whole which a just man doeth ; he also doeth good, and is possessed of a good heart." I should be

glad to know if “always,” and “deed, word and thought” do not comprehend all one’s time, and all one’s employment? “Thought, word and deed,” seem to include the whole of a man’s *work*; and according to *Johnson’s* dictionary, the word “always” signifies, “perpetually, constantly,” which includes the whole of a man’s *time*. This being the case, pray be so kind as to inform us in what space of time, which is *perpetually* employed in sinning in “deed, word and thought,” the same identical man “does good.” And if he “is possessed of a good heart,” how is it that he sins “always,” “especially as it respects the exercises of his *heart*?” But I would apologize for these strange inconsistencies. You were fearful, perhaps, that some might take an advantage from the liberty which your doctrine gave them, when you told them a believer “always sins;” and lest they might act according to such licence, and be consistent in faith and practice, you wished to guard them and yourself against such pernicious consequences, and so told them their hearts were *good*, and that accordingly they must do good, at least “sometimes.”

I hope your hearers and readers will take this part of your doctrine, and exemplify it in their lives, by *doing good*, even by keeping the commandments of God.

10. The candid Christian reader is left to determine for himself, which doctrine is most congruous with scripture and reason, That which teaches the necessity of sin in the hearts and lives of all believ-

ers during life, or that which represents Christ as the great purifier of the heart—That which limits the *skill, truth* and faithfulness of the divine Physician, or that which exhibits him as a perfect Saviour, who *saves to the uttermost all that come unto God by him*, and delivers those who *through fear of death were all their life time subject to bondage*.

That we may heartily embrace, and fully experience the height and depth of that *perfect love which casteth out fear*, even the fear of offending a friend by speaking the *truth in love*, is, dear sir, the ardent prayer of, Yours, &c.

N. BANGS.

REV. S. WILLISTON, *Durham, N. Y.*

Rhinebeck, May 10, 1815.



LETTER V.

ON THE POSSIBILITY OF FALLING FROM GRACE.

Rev. Sir,

THE several branches of Gospel truth, mutually depend upon each other, like the different members of the human body : God alone is absolutely independent, all creatures being dependent on him for their existence, and for all the temporal and spiritual blessings which they enjoy. He also is the fountain of all truth, from whom the stream of revelation issues. To this revelation therefore, we must have recourse to decide all subjects of controversy.

I. 1. In regard to the possibility of a saint's so falling from grace as to perish everlastingly, many arguments might be deduced from the attributes of God, the moral agency, and consequent responsibility of Christians ; from the analogy of things, as well as the dangerous tendency of a contrary sentiment, to shew the danger of apostatizing from the faith : but on a point so easily proved from the sacred scriptures, I shall confine myself *principally* to them. In the first place, however, it seems neces-

sary to examine some of the arguments with which you endeavour to support the opposite doctrine. Your first attempt to prove, that a believer “ cannot fall away so as to fail of eternal blessedness,” is by “ attending to the nature of the covenant of redemption, which subsists between the persons of the God-head, concerning the redemption of men.” p. 105.

2. It seems important to enquire, whether or not such a covenant of redemption as you have represented, and which you suppose was made “ Between the persons of the Godhead,” before the foundation of the world, be scriptural. That we have no account of *such* a covenant, which is limited in its provisions to one part of mankind only, is manifest, I think, from those passages of scripture which speak upon this subject. However, as you have quoted some texts to prove this part of your system, it seems proper to notice them. The first you appeal to is Psalm cx. 3. *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.* It is truly surprising that this text should be cited to prove that there was a covenant of redemption made between the persons of the Godhead, who are essentially one, in eternity. From the context it is manifest the Psalmist was speaking of the *willingness* of God’s people to execute his commands in the day of his powerful vengeance. V. 2. *The Lord shall send the rod of his strength out of Zion : rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.* V. 3. *Thy people shall be willing, &c.* Any considerate mind must be con-

vinced from the reading this text, that it can have no reference to such a covenant as you have supposed.

3. You next quote Isaiah liii. 10, 11. *When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed:—He shall see the travail of his soul, and be satisfied.* This text, which relates altogether to the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, and the glorious consequences thereof, you quoted to prove that there was a covenant made between the triune God in eternity! Is not this manifestly wresting scripture, if not to our own destruction, at least to the destruction of truth and consistency? In regard to the other text which you have quoted, I have already explained it, see p. 115. These are all the texts which you have cited to support your notion of the covenant of redemption.

4. You say, p. 109, 'That the covenant of redemption "is distinct from the covenant of grace." *Redemption signifies, to re-purchase what had been sold or lost.** Thus understood, all the temporal and spiritual blessings of life, not excepting our own existence, which were forfeited by Adam's sin, are in consequence of the *price of redemption*. All were lost in Adam—all were re-purchased by Christ, the second Adam. Whether therefore, the covenant of redemption was made in eternity, or in time, whether before the fatal apostacy, or after it, it is manifest that it was not restricted to a part of Adam's posterity, to the exclusion of all the rest.—

* See *Cruden's Concordance*.

And if the above definition of redemption be accurate, (which, I think, cannot be reasonably disputed) does not the *work of redemption*, or the *act of redeeming*, relate to the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, by which he purchased these favours for us? If so, what becomes of your partial and contracted views of it, which say, that its benefits extend to only a *part* of the human family? After Adam's transgression, *God came down in the cool of the day*, and made promise of a Saviour to him.— And it is certain all the human race were representatively in Adam when he fell; and of course were, in the same sense, in him when the promise of a Redeemer was made. And by what rule of reasoning, or from what part of scripture, will you prove that the promise was made only to a part of Adam's posterity, who were then in his loins? All the human family were then in his loins, and therefore all were equally interested in the grand covenant of redemption.

5. According to your representation of this subject, the covenant of redemption, which you suppose was made in eternity, is the *new* covenant, I suppose in contradistinction from the covenant of works, which was made with Adam in *Paradise*.— However accurate it may be to distinguish these covenants one from the other, it seems quite improper, upon *your view of the subject*, to denominate the covenant of redemption, the *new* covenant. For if this covenant were made in eternity, “between the persons of the godhead,” as you affirm, it must

be the *old* covenant. And, in respect to this, the Apostle saith, Heb. viii. 13. "He hath made the *first old*. Now, that which decayeth, and waxeth *old*, is ready to *vanish away*." But in regard to the *new* covenant, the same inspired Apostle saith, ch. x. 16—20. "This is the *covenant* that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the BLOOD OF JESUS, by a NEW AND LIVING way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." Here is a description of the *new* covenant; and there is not the remotest allusion to its being made in eternity, "between the persons of the godhead." All the blessings flowing from it, are represented as being in consequence of the efficacious BLOOD OF JESUS, which you allow was shed for *all* mankind. It being scriptural, and therefore proper, to denominate this covenant *new*, is no inconsiderable proof against your opinion respecting its having been made from all eternity: because, in that case, it should be called the *old* covenant, if we use terms according to their established import. It is manifest that Adam was not made in *eternity*, but in *time*; and therefore the covenant of works which was made with him, was also in *time*; consequently, allowing your notion of the covenant of redemption;

the covenant of works was *posterior* to the covenant of redemption, and of course it should be called the *new* covenant. But the scriptures uniformly distinguish the covenant of redemption from the covenant of works, by calling it *new*; from which circumstance it follows, that this part of your fortification is vulnerable, I mean, that your notions respecting the covenant of redemption, appear unscriptural. And inasmuch as this covenant was ratified by the *blood* of Jesus Christ; and as this blood was poured out for *all men*, it follows that God had respect to all the human family, when this covenant was made and ratified.

6. To be convinced of this, we need only appeal to those scriptures which speak on this subject.— Isa. liii. 6. *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one from his own way, and the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all.* According to this solemn declaration of the Prophet, all those who had gone astray were interested in the meritorious sufferings of Christ. And certainly *all* had gone astray; and therefore the iniquity of *all* was laid upon him. The same sentiment is inculcated by the Apostle Paul, 2 Cor. v. 14. *For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all then were all dead.*— Here it should be noticed that the Apostle assumes as an indisputable truth, that Christ died for *all*, from whence he drew the conclusion, that *all* were dead. Titus ii. 5, 6. *For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;*

who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. Heb. ii. 9. *That he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.* From these texts of sacred scripture, it is evident that, If the covenant of redemption signifies as you say it does, that “The Father engages to give up his Son to become a propitiation for sin,” it includes ample provision for the sin of the whole world. And that it does, is undeniably proved by the testimony of John, chap. ii. 2. *And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.* If therefore there be any credit due to inspiration, (and who but infidels can pretend to doubt it) we cannot hesitate to believe, that if Christ were given for any, he was given for all; for we have the same proof of the one as of the other. It follows then that whether the covenant of redemption was made before the apostacy of man, or after, whether “between the persons of the Godhead,” or between the triune God and man, it is indisputably certain, that it comprehended all mankind, making ample provision for the salvation of each individual of the human race. This point being established, we have as full proof as we can ask for against your contracted and unscriptural notion of the covenant of redemption. That the atonement was made for all, is so clearly demonstrated from scripture, you are forced to yield to its truth; for in your seventh sermon, p. 154, you say that the atonement was made “not for a part, but for all mankind;” but yet in this fifth sermon, you contend that the cove-

nant of redemption, includes “only a part of mankind,”—and in your sermon on election you maintain that God from all eternity reprobated a part of mankind to eternal torments! How you will reconcile these discordant sentiments, who can tell?

7. Your doctrine, sir, sets God the Father and God the Son at variance. It represents God the Father as dooming from all eternity a part of Adam’s children to never-ending torments, not because he foresaw they would reject the offers of mercy, and thus fit themselves for destruction; but merely because he would, or because he saw it necessary for the “good of the great whole.” And yet it represents God the Son as dying to make reconciliation for those identical reprobates, that they might be saved. In this manner the Son of God is represented as opposing the designs of the Father. Jesus Christ wept over Jerusalem, saying, *How often would I have gathered you, but ye would not*—but according to your system, God the Father had from all eternity reprobated those very Jews from all the benefits of Christ’s death. Was Jesus Christ, think you, ignorant of this decree of reprobation; and therefore died to save those who were doomed to everlasting perdition? If he knew there were such a decree, why did he die for them? This single fact, that Christ died to make atonement for all mankind, which you also admit, is sufficient to erase from the foundation, the whole fabric of partial election, reprobation, and limited redemption, which you have vainly attempted to

support. Moreover, to assert that God from all eternity reprobated the Jews to everlasting misery ; and also that Christ died for them, and wept over them while beholding their approaching doom, is impeaching the *sincerity* of the benevolent Saviour of sinners, and calling in question his infinite knowledge. If he really knew there were such a decree, and that it was founded in justice and goodness, and then set himself to oppose its taking effect by atoning for their sins, that they might be saved, conveys such a contemptible idea of the immaculate author of our salvation, that if there were no other assignable reason, this alone would be sufficient to induce us to reject your system. On this account your new system is far worse than old calvinism, which limits the atonement to the elect only : for in so doing, it does not set the Father and Son at variance. If the Lord Jesus tasted death for every man, as he certainly did, (and in this point you have the honour of concurring with scripture) then your notions of the covenant of redemption are incorrect.

8. Perhaps you will say, “ That although Jesus Christ *died for all men*, he did not die to *save* them.” If he did not die to *save* them, what end had he in view in dying for them ? To damn them in hell for ever ? Was this the *benevolent intention* of the immaculate Son of God in dying for sinners ! Is it possible for the human mind to conceive a more dishonourable idea of the loving Saviour of the world ! Some have intimated that he died for those who

were eternally reprobated, that they might enjoy *temporal* blessings. But this certainly is making a *bad* matter *worse* ; for the more temporal mercies are *enjoyed* and *abused*, the more will misery be augmented eternally. For mankind are not only accountable for spiritual mercies, but also for temporal favours. This is manifest from the many, serious warnings recorded in the sacred Scriptures, which are given to those who are *rich in this world's goods*. *Make to yourselves friends with the mammon of unrighteousness, &c.* To suppose therefore that the Lord Jesus died only to purchase temporal mercies for the reprobates, *without any intention to save them*, is to suppose that he designed only to bring them into personal existence, that they might be fatted for the slaughter, and that their eternal misery in hell might be the more complete ! And he must have had, either *no* end in view, or he must have designed their *salvation*, or their *damnation*. To say he had *no* end in view, is to impeach his *wisdom*. To say he designed their damnation while he bled upon the cross for them, is to make him the most execrable hypocrite ? What ! Pray for those whose damnation he meant to secure, and whose misery he meant to augment, by this amazing act of love !

But, the Apostle Paul will tell us for what purpose Christ *tasted death for every man* ; “ And that he *died for all*, that they which *live*, should not henceforth *live unto themselves*, but unto HIM WHICH DIED FOR THEM, and rose again,” 2 Cor. v. 15.—

In these words it is explicitly stated, 1. That Christ died for ALL, without exception. 2. That the *end* of his dying for them was, that they might *live unto him* who thus *died for them*. This puts the matter beyond dispute respecting the design of his having died for *all men*. Now if he died that they *might be saved*, it is also possible they *should be saved*; and if possible they should be saved, then they were not excluded from all the benefits of redemption, nor reprobated from all eternity by an irresistible decree. So that, view your system which way we will, its erroneousness stares us in the face.—For, by even allowing that Christ died to purchase temporal mercies for the reprobates, we thereby destroy your contracted views of the covenant of redemption, unless you suppose these blessings were not forfeited; and if they were not forfeited, then they have a *right* to them, on the principle of *justice*. Will this do? I trow not. For if they can claim them as their *right* they are not of *grace*, and if not of *grace*, there is no cause of thanksgiving for them.

9. To shew that your distinction between redemption and the atonement is unscriptural, I shall examine those scriptures which speak upon this subject. To *redeem* signifies, as I have before observed, to buy again something which had been sold, or forfeited. In this sense the word is used Lev. xxv. 25. *If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away some of his possession, and if any of his kin come to redeem it, then shall he redeem that which*

his brother sold. In this sense also it is used when speaking of the redemption of souls : Isaiah lii. 3. *For thus saith the Lord, ye have sold yourselves for nought ; and ye shall be redeemed (or bought back) without money.* In regard to the work of redemption accomplished by Christ, the scriptures uniformly ascribe it to his death, to the shedding of his blood—1 Pet. i. 18, 19. *Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things—But with the precious BLOOD of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot.* Rev. v. 9. *For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy BLOOD.* From these passages of scripture it is obvious, that the bitter sufferings and bloody death of Jesus Christ was the grand work, the price of redemption. This is also pointedly expressed by Paul, Gal. iv. 4, 5. *But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To REDEEM them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.* Those who have redemption, are said to have it through his blood—Eph. i. 7. *In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.* In all these texts which speak expressly on the subject of redemption, there is no information respecting a covenant “made between the persons of the Godhead” for one part of mankind only ; but they relate expressly to the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. By admitting therefore that Christ died for all, you also admit that the scheme of redemption comprehended all ;

so that your distinction between the work of atonement and redemption is utterly repugnant to scripture. To redeem is to buy, by paying the price demanded. Mankind had sold themselves to sin. In consequence of this, divine justice had an inflexible demand upon them. The law of God was armed with awful penalties against its violators; and Jesus Christ came to *redeem us from this curse*, by being made a *curse for us*. To effect this benevolent design it was necessary he should *die*, because the sentence denounced against man was *death*—And he died for all without exception. Hence it is said, *Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price*. If then the *death* of Jesus Christ was the meritorious act by which the glorious work of redemption was accomplished, and if he died for all as the scriptures assert, and you admit, then your distinction between *redemption* and *atonement* is unfounded.

10. Perhaps you will reply, that the atonement is distinct from the covenant of grace. We grant there is a distinction. For the grand work of atonement was completed without any condition on our part. Christ by his sufferings and death accomplished this work, and thereby opened a way by which sinners might come to God and obtain life everlasting. But there is no such distinction as you suppose there is, between the covenant of redemption, and the covenant of grace. The first you think is limited to the elect only; whereas I have already proved that it is full and complete for

all the human family. But the latter, the covenant of grace, is conditional. It is made between God and man. All, it is true, are both commanded and invited to accede to its terms, and live. That this covenant is conditional, the text, which you have made the foundation of your discourse on this subject, abundantly proves. John vi. 47. *He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.* Here *believeth* is the express condition, on the performance of which everlasting life is given.

11. It may be said, "That if Christ made an unconditional atonement for all mankind, then all will be saved." This indeed would follow, if salvation were also unconditional. But this is not the case; which is demonstrated from those passages of scripture which prove that some of those for whom Christ died, nevertheless perish. Isa. xxii. 8, 9. *Wherefore hath the Lord done this unto this city? Then they shall answer, (not because they were excluded from the covenant of redemption by a decree of reprobation, but) because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God.* You say the covenant of grace is unconditional. But it seems in the circumstance before us, that in consequence of their not fulfilling the condition, they were cast off. Heb. viii. 9. *Because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.*—From these texts it appears the people forfeited the blessings annexed to the covenant, because they did not fulfil its conditions. 2 Pet. ii. 1. *Even denying the Lord that BOUGHT them, and bring upon*

themselves swift destruction. Did not those who were *bought* by Christ, belong to him by right of redemption? And yet it seems some of those very persons brought upon themselves swift destruction! John xvii. 12. *Those thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition.*—Here also, we have an account of one who had been given to Christ, that was lost. You say, p. 106. Christ engages “to save to the uttermost all whom the Father has given him.” If this be so, then Christ was not true to his engagements; for he himself saith, in the above passage, that he had lost one whom the Father had given him. And if Christ does not fulfil his engagements, “how can he be said to be faithful to his Father?” p. 107.

12. In regard to the price of redemption, or work of atonement, I grant, it “did not depend on any conditions to be performed by men,” because it was effected by Jesus Christ, independently of all men; but that our present and eternal salvation is suspended on conditions to be performed by men, is abundantly manifest from numerous passages of scripture. I have already observed that your text is a proof in point, *He that believeth on me, hath everlasting life.* And it should be noted that there is a material difference between *believ-eth* and *believ-ed*. The former, according to the strictest rules of language, signifying a *continuation* in the faith; the latter being a participle in the past tense, refers to an act previously performed. We know also that *faith without works is dead, being alone.*—

In order to continue in the faith we must persevere in every good word and work. *Seest thou how faith wrought together with his works, and by works was faith made perfect, Jam. ii. 22.* Everlasting life is no where promised but in connexion with believing. By what rule of criticism, or reasoning, will you attempt to prove that believing is not a *duty*, and therefore not a *condition*? But if you have not given us the *proof*, we have your assertion. “Christ did not engage *conditionally* that he would keep believers from falling, provided they were willing to be kept,” p. 108. This is a bold assertion, in direct opposition to the plainest declarations of scripture. John xv. 7, “If ye *abide* in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” Ver. 10. “*If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love.*”—Here Christ promises to answer their prayer on *condition* of their *abiding* in him; and on *condition* of *keeping* his commandments, they shall *abide in his love*. John xii. 46. “I am come a light into the world, that whosoever *believeth* in me, should not *abide* in darkness.” Here is the *condition* of *believing*, in order to a deliverance from *darkness*.—xiii. 17. “If ye know these things, happy are ye *if ye do them.*” Col. i. 23. “*If ye continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel,*” &c. This was a solemn caution to those who were *sometimes alienated, and enemies in their minds by wicked works, but were now reconciled*, ver. 14. And con-

tinuing in the faith is the express condition of their final salvation. Rev. x. 11. "Be thou *faithful* unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life—He that *overcometh* shall not be hurt of the second death." According to these declarations of the faithful and *true witness*, the *crown of life* was suspended on condition of the *faithfulness* of the *Angel* of the Church of *Smyrna*; and to avoid the second death, he must continue to overcome. These quotations are sufficient to convince every unbiassed mind, that you have no authority from scripture to say "Christ did not engage conditionally to keep believers from falling." See also 2 Pet. i. 5—10, *If ye do these things ye shall never fall.*

13. In page 109 you quote Isaiah lv. 3. *Incline your ear and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live—and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.* O the power of prejudice! In this very passage which you quote to prove the certain and unconditional perseverance of all who ever believed, there are no less than three conditions expressed. 1. *Incline your ear.* 2. *Come unto me.* 3. *Hear—*And then there is a three-fold *promise*, answering to the conditions. 1. *Your soul shall live.* 2. *I will make an everlasting covenant with you.* 3. *Even the sure mercies of David.* Indeed you yourself say, "They are invited and commanded to accept of it." And is not accepting of a promise a condition! If a promise of any thing is made to a person on condition of his acceptance, does it not presuppose that

if he do not accept, the promise shall not be accomplished?

II. 1. Having thus paved the way, I shall, in the second place endeavour to prove the possibility of a saint's so falling from faith and love, as to perish forever. 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. *If thou seek him he will be found of thee ; but if thou forsake him he will cast thee off forever.* Isa. i. 28. *And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed.* Ezek. xxxiii. 13. *When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby.* See also ver. 12, 13. To this text some have objected, That the righteous spoken of were self-righteous—but this is a miserable evasion to avoid the point of truth. A self-righteous man is a wicked man. And would it not be perfect nonsense to say to a wicked man, that, if he turned from his wickedness, and committeth iniquity, all his wickedness should not be remembered, but for his wickedness he should surely die!—John xv. 6. *If a man abide not in me he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered ; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.* To this some may object, that the abiding in Christ means, to abide externally in him—but this frivolous objection will be entirely removed by attending to the context. In verse 1, Christ compares himself to the vine ; and in ver. 2, his disciples to the branches. He then in ver. 3, addresses them

thus; “Now ye are *clean* through the word which I have spoken unto you.” If the persons spoken of were only *externally* in him, he has taught them to *abide* externally in him; which is the same as to teach them to remain merely nominal professors of religion, and they should bring forth much fruit—but if a man did not abide nominally in him, he should be cast forth as a branch, and finally be burned. In opposition to this sentiment, we may observe, that mere nominal professors of religion are never said to be *in Christ*. On the contrary it is said, “If any man be *in Christ* he is a new creature.” Moreover, the same persons said to be *in Christ* the *true vine*, are pronounced *clean* by Christ himself.

2. Heb. vi. 4—6. *For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.* It is not a little surprising that persons who think it impossible to be delivered from sin in this life, should nevertheless suppose that a person may attain to the several particulars mentioned in this passage, and yet not have a Christian experience. I know not to what higher attainments a christian can arrive in this life, than, 1. To be enlightened—The eyes of your understanding

being enlightened, says Paul to the Ephesian believers. 2. To taste of the heavenly gift,—*Taste*, says the Psalmist, *and see that the Lord is gracious*. 3. To be made partakers of the Holy Ghost,—*As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God*. The Holy Ghost was considered one of the greatest gifts in the primitive age of Christianity. 4. And of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come. Such may nevertheless fall away and perish forever. But, says the objector, “If they shall fall away—whereas it is impossible they should.” Those who will consult the original Greek text, will agree with WESLEY, MACKNIGHT, and other learned critics, that there is no *if* in the original. The literal translation would be, *Having fallen away*, &c.

3. Passages of scripture speaking a similar language could easily be multiplied; but they who will not be convinced by those already cited, would not be persuaded by an hundred more. I consider the question under consideration fully decided from unequivocal scripture testimony; and therefore the contrary doctrine, that a believer cannot fall away and perish, cannot be true. When you are able to bring one text which says a saint cannot thus fall away, it will be time to review the ground; but this you neither have, nor can do,—and as to your inferential proof, deduced from the covenant of redemption, and the covenant of grace, as it is founded in erroneous conceptions of those covenants, it can

never stand against the pointed testimony of scripture.*

III. 1. In part second, you make an attempt to obviate some objections to your doctrine. You suppose the objector to ask, "Why is it so often spoken of as suspended on *conditions*?" And after making some unimportant observations, you say, "It is by complying with these conditions, that we make our salvation sure," p. 115. Here, sir, you give up the doctrine of *unconditional* election, and perseverance; it being certain, that if the salvation of all the elect were *secured* when the covenant of redemption was made "between the persons of the Godhead," as you elsewhere assert, it is not made *sure* by any *condition* performed by them; or, if it be made "sure" by performing the condition, it was not made "sure" before the foundation of the world. The flood tide of scripture truth *will* sweep you from your "foundation work" sometimes. Did you mean to assert in this place that the covenant of grace is conditional? If so, have we any right to expect the fulfilment of the promise until the condition be complied with? But how is your assertion in this place consistent with what you say, p. 109. "The Holy Spirit covenanted, without any conditions to be performed by men, to renew and sancti-

* Those who wish to see this subject treated more largely, are referred to a work now publishing in New-York, by the Book Agents for the Methodist connexion, written by Thomas Olivers, one of the European Methodist preachers.

fy the hearts of all those whom the Father gave to the Son." When the hearts of believers are renewed and sanctified, is their "salvation made sure?" This you say is to be done *without* conditions; and yet our salvation is to be made sure by performing conditions! According to this statement we have an *unconditional—conditional* covenant! Inimitable consistency! A few more such strokes of Hopkinsian divinity will add new lustre to its fame!

2. In page 117, you intimate that from real godliness a man cannot turn away, but "from a profession of godliness a man may turn away." Had Satan and his legions only a profession of godliness, antecedent to their apostacy? And Adam and Eve, were they only painted sepulchres when they came perfect from the hands of their Maker? But let us examine some of those characters, whose apostacy is recorded in the holy scriptures. 1 Tim. i. 18, "War a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience, which some having put away, concerning faith have made shipwreck." Has an hypocrite, or a mere nominal professor, *faith* and a *good conscience*? Concerning the wicked, it is said they have *not faith*, and their *consciences are defiled*.—2 Pet. ii. 20, 21. "If *after* they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are *again entangled* therein and overcome; the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of

righteousness, than after they had known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them."

On this text it is proper to remark, 1. That the persons said to turn away, had escaped the pollutions of the world, through the "knowledge of Jesus Christ." "This is eternal life to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Has a mere external professor that knowledge of God which is *eternal life*? That they had in reality escaped is manifest from these words, *again entangled therein*, which plainly suppose they had been once *disentangled*. 2. They are said to have *known the way of righteousness*, which no hypocrite does. 3. They turned from the holy commandment delivered unto them. No words can more emphatically mark apostacy from real godliness than those of St. Peter, "That the *knowledge of the way of righteousness* which they had attained, was an inward experimental knowledge, is evident from that other expression, 'They had escaped the pollutions of the world:' an expression parallel to that in the preceding chapter, 'Having escaped the corruption which is in the world.' And in both chapters this effect is ascribed to the same cause: termed in the first, 'The knowledge of him who hath called us to glory and virtue;' in the second more explicitly, The knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Discip. p. 86.

3. To this, however, you oppose a text of scripture. *They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt*

have continued with us : but they went out, that they might be made manifest, that they were not all of us. On this text you observe, “ The whole force of the Apostle’s argument, to prove that these apostate professors were never real Christians, will go to prove that all other apostates were never real Christians,” p. 112. Is this reasoning conclusive? Is it not rather contrary to the rule of sober argument to draw *general* conclusions from *particular* facts. Suppose it were a fact that such a man was expelled from your church, because he was detected for holding what you might call heretical doctrine, which it would appear he *always* held : would it be deemed sound logic to infer from this *solitary* instance, that *all* who ever embraced heterodox sentiments, had *never* embraced your system of doctrines?— Does not every attentive mind see, that this is assuming the point in debate? Equally inconsequent is your reasoning on the above passage.

But St. John does not say they were *never* of them ; but only they were not of them at the time they went out ; for, if they had been united in Christian affection at *that time*, they would *no doubt have continued with them.* While the principle of divine love abides in the heart, there can be no desire to separate from the real children of God.— They first backslide in heart, and loose that warmth of affection which they once had for their brethren ; and then it might be said of them in truth, *they were not of us.*

Thus, no doubt, it was with those apostates of which John speaks. Ceasing to guard “the sacred treasure” of brotherly love, and gradually declining in the divine life, they lost that cordial union with the living members of Christ’s church, which binds them together in the bundle of life. Being thus separated in affection, by having the ligaments of Christian friendship cut asunder, they visibly separated from the church, and joined affinity with the world, or formed a party of their own—so that, at the *time they went out*, they were not one with the faithful in Christ Jesus. This is the general method by which souls apostatize from faith and love. They seldom, if ever, descend from a high state of holiness, to a low state of iniquity at *once*; but first, gradually decline in regard to the life of inward religion until they lose their spiritual strength, and then they become an easy prey to their enemies.

4. It should be carefully noted that apostates are threatened *for* their apostacy, and not for what they were *previous* to their fall. If they were always hypocrites, why are they threatened with a sorer punishment for having apostatized? Is it such a crime for them to forsake their hypocrisy, that they must be punished with everlasting destruction for so doing? Heb. x. 29. “Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith *he was sanctified*, an unholy thing, and hath done des-

pite unto the Spirit of grace.” Can it be said, in any scriptural sense, that a mere self-righteous, pharisaical professor, is sanctified by the *blood of the covenant*? But the persons spoken of in this text are said to have been thus sanctified. And the *much sorer punishment* spoken of, is on account of their ungrateful apostacy, which supposes, that if they had retained their standing, they should escape the punishment threatened. But hypocrites and pharisees will be punished whether they stand in their deceit or not, unless they sincerely repent and return unto God. From the whole, I think we have abundant reason to conclude that there is great danger of turning away, not only from a “profession of godliness,” but also from a state of justification and sanctification. If you say impossible: I would ask, Is it not possible to be mistaken in your sentiment on this subject? If you say no, then you set up for *infallibility*; a claim which the protestant world will not, it is presumed, allow you.—If you say it is *possible* to be mistaken, you give up the point, and grant the *possibility* of totally falling from grace. If you say it is not possible, because the scriptures are in your favour, you thereby assume nearly as high ground as the *Pope* still; because the reply supposes you cannot mistake the meaning of scripture. By granting the bare *possibility* of mistaking the design of those scriptures you have quoted to support your doctrine, you grant all I contend for, and acknowledge that it is possible for a saint so to fall as to perish forever. This ar-

gument cannot be retorted upon us, for we allow the possibility of a believer's persevering steadfast to the end : and also that there is no *necessity* for any one to apostatize from the faith.

5. It should be carefully noted that the argument is, respecting the bare *possibility* of a saint's so falling from grace as to perish. If, indeed, we had infallible testimony that any one ever did thus apostatize, the point would be beyond the reach of controversy ; but as the question now stands this is not necessary, because the simple question is, whether it be *possible* : and any thing which is possible *may* be. Now any thing is possible which does not involve a *contradiction* ; which no man, I think, will contend that the doctrine contended for does.— This being duly considered, the force of the reasoning above will be felt, viz. That, by admitting the *mere possibility of a mistake*, on your side of the question, the *impossibility* of total apostacy is given up. There are some things *impossible*.— All which involves contradictions and absurdities are impossible. Thus, it is impossible for God to *lie*, because he is a God of immutable *truth* : it is also impossible he should do any thing *cruel, unjust, foolish, or wicked*, because he is *merciful, just, wise and good*. From this consideration, that if he does any thing cruel, unjust, foolish, and wicked, it *contradicts*, and totally annihilates his goodness, justice, wisdom, &c. the doctrine of universal and irresistible decrees is proved false ; because that doctrine supposes all foolish and wicked at-

tions are brought to pass by the Almighty. It may, however, be said, "That if a believer may so fall away as to perish, the *faithfulness* of God fails." To this it is answered, that the *faithfulness* of God is demonstrated, in accomplishing all his promises. These promises are conditional. *If* ye repent, *if* ye believe, *if* ye endure, &c. If we fail to fulfil the conditions, God's faithfulness does not fail, but the failure is on our part. Matter of fact will best establish and illustrate this idea. God made promise to the enslaved Israelites that he would give them the land of Canaan for their possession; but the sequel of their history proves that only two of all those who came out of Egypt, experienced the fulfilment of this promise. Did God's faithfulness fail in this instance? By no means. But the faithfulness of the people failing, God was under no obligation, not even from his faithfulness, to accomplish his promise. The sentiments here expressed are beautifully confirmed by that passage in Jeremiah, which unfolds the general method by which God deals with nations, communities and individuals. "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and destroy it; if that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it, if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the

good wherewith I said I would benefit them," Jer. xviii. 7—10. See also the book of Jonah.

6. You ask, "Is it not more to the honour of Christ—to perfect the begun cure, than to begin the healing, and still let them die in their sins?" p. 119. To this question we answer, yes, if the believing soul persevere in well doing. And therefore your doctrine respecting the necessary continuance of sin, "especially as it respects the heart," is highly dishonourable to God. But you ask this question to prove that all in whom a good work has been begun, shall infallibly persevere to the end. Did not the Lord begin a good work in the heart of Saul, the king of Israel, when he gave him another heart? And did not Saul afterwards forsake following the Lord? Did he not begin a good work in the heart of Judas? Or, was his call to the ministry a *bad* work? And was this good work perfected? Or did not Judas rather *quench the Spirit* by indulging covetous desires, which led him on to treachery and a premature death? And *Hymenus, Philetus*, and *Alexander*, did not the Lord begin a good work in their hearts? And yet *they made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience*. If the "introduction of sin into the system has proved, and shall prove—the occasion of great good" (p. 120) in regard to the first apostacy, why may not apostacy among God's redeemed creatures, be the cause of great good also? The same cause will produce the same effect. And if sin was the occasion of great good once in the "hands of a wise and holy

God;" why may not a repetition of the same crimes be productive of similar effects?

7. In the application of your discourse, in which you enumerate the utility of your doctrine, you conclude that your's is the only system which leads believers to trust in Jesus Christ for strength and support. Whereas we no more teach people to trust in any "innate or imparted strength" of our own, nor in "frames and feelings" for salvation, than Paul did when he said, "This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world." A friend says to a drowning man, "Hold fast to my hand, and I will draw you from the water." Does the drowning man "save himself" in this instance, or does his friend deliver him? So the Lord Jesus saith to sinners, *Repent, believe, love and obey, to the end of your pilgrimage, and you shall have everlasting life—I will give you a crown of life.* To say that this doctrine leads to selfishness and to self-dependence, is to impeach the Lord Jesus, who is the author of it, with teaching mankind to trust in themselves. The scripture doctrine of perseverance, which we advocate, asserts, that the *grace* of repentance, the *power* to believe, and the *ability* to love and obey, are all gratuitously bestowed upon man; so that, were they withheld, no one could *make his calling and election sure.* Every considerate mind will perceive that this doctrine secures to Jesus Christ the honour of giving eternal life to believers, and fixes

the shame of eternal death upon unbelievers themselves, which your new-fangled scheme charges upon God, which says, he fore-ordained their guilt and condemnation before the foundation of the world.

8. You likewise endeavour to shew the *comfort* which your doctrine affords to believers. And it is granted, that, if it presented any infallible marks by which a person might assure himself he is a true believer, he might derive some comfort from the consideration that he shall be finally happy. But if I mistake not, your doctrine affords no *such evidence* to the believing mind, except it be his *doubts, fears, and sinfulness*; for you say, p. 117, “the holding out in a profession to the end of life, is no decided proof in our favour.” And in page 78, you suppose the penitent sinner to say, “My conviction is no proof that I am to be converted.” Is this doctrine comforting? According to your “view of the doctrine” of election and perseverance, no one can have any satisfactory evidence that he is a Christian this side the grave. For in order to know that he is one of the elect, he must first persevere to the end; because backsliding, or “Not holding out to the end, in the profession of godliness, is a decided proof that he never knew the grace of God in truth,” p. 117. And if a man does not know himself one of the elect, how can he take any comfort from the promises? A reprobate certainly cannot derive solid comfort from the general promises of eternal life, even though he should believe him-

self elected. According to your notion, therefore, all that the best can do in this life, is to conjecture. And is it comforting to have the soul continually harrassed with doubts and fears, and to be labouring under the galling yoke of sin all one's days? It is true you tell us that "Christ's real friends love him, and keep his commandments;" but at another time you earnestly contend that no one does keep his commandments, but doth "always sin in deed, word and thought." From these contradictory assertions, what is the supposed Christian to conclude? He cannot believe in both propositions; and therefore it must be extremely difficult, if not utterly impossible, to determine whether he be a "real friend" to Christ, or only a boasting hypocrite.—If he were to believe in the first, that he loves God, and keeps his commandments, he would no longer be a Hopkinsian; and therefore, although he might enjoy comfort, it would not be in consequence of believing in your doctrine. If he believes in the latter, that he "always sins," he could have no just criterion to distinguish between his own character, and the character of a reprobate; for the reprobate cannot do worse than sin "always in deed, word and thought." So that, view your doctrine which way soever we may, it exhibits a dark and melancholy cloud to the human mind. Not so the true doctrines of Christianity. They declare that *He that believeth hath the witness in himself*—that, *the Spirit itself beareth witness with their spirits, that they are the children of God*—That they may know

they have passed from death unto life, because they love the brethren. And if any should be sincerely mistaken respecting their present attainments, they are exhorted to search diligently into their own hearts, and never to rest satisfied until they have a satisfactory evidence of their *acceptance in the beloved*—Until they have an assurance of that peace of God which passeth all human understanding. They are authorised to believe, that Christ who is their life, is abundantly able, and willing to save them to the uttermost, even from all their sins, and to perfect them in love—That he is both able and willing to keep them from falling, (*if they turn not again to folly*) and to give them an *abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of God.*

9. Your doctrine is as *dangerous* as it is *comfortless*. If the first act of divine grace is believed to be justification, and if, after a sinner has experienced light and conviction, he rests satisfied, believing he cannot so fall as to perish, and if he should be mistaken in his conclusion respecting his experience, (which I think you will allow is possible that he may be)—Admitting, I say, this to be the case, such a man is in imminent danger of eternal perdition. That your doctrine has this deceptive influence is evident; because you suppose all who are effectually called, are justified, and will be eventually glorified. But if you say it is not possible a man can be mistaken in regard to his call and experience, you thereby nulify all the cautions given in scripture against deception; and also overthrow

all you have said respecting deceivers and being deceived. If a man then has one good desire after holiness, he is, according to your notion, sure of heaven. Is not this daubing sinners with untempered mortar, in the most important sense of the word? Moreover, by telling believers that they must live in sin all the days of their lives; that they may indulge in pride, impenitence, unbelief, or any other heart sin; or plunge into adultery, lying, and cheating, without endangering their salvation; and if after all, that doctrine should prove false, they are irretrievably gone. And the many serious cautions which are given in scripture against apostacy, renders it extremely probable, (and in my mind leaves no doubt) that one who is a believer now, may, through disobedience, so fall as to perish. So that there is not only a *possibility*, but a strong *probability* in favour of our sentiment. On this subject we may reason as *Saurin* does against infidelity. If there are *five* probabilities in favour of your sentiment, and only *one* in favour of ours, reason dictates that ours should be embraced; for if the one *probability* supposed to be in our favour should prove an *impossibility*; i. e. if our doctrine should be found erroneous, yours will hold us; but if your five probabilities should fail, while the believer is indulging in sin, according to the licence your doctrine gives him, he is gone forever. The reason of this will appear evident to every one who recollects, that we teach the necessity of justification by grace through faith—

that we must have the faith which works by love, and purifies the heart—that we must press on to the perfection of love, and be saved from all sin, *properly so called*. Now if a soul attain to justification, if the doctrine of infallible perseverance be true, he is safe. His being cautioned against falling, cannot endanger his salvation. But if that doctrine should prove false, and yet the justified believer should cease to persevere, the consequence is fatal. It is not, however, hereby granted, that there are five probabilities in favour of your doctrine to one in favour of ours. This instance is produced to shew the dangerous tendency of your system.

10. But this is not all. It also renders useless a great part of the Bible; for it must be admitted that there are innumerable places, where the condition of salvation is expressed. Such as, *If ye endure—Be thou faithful—If ye hold fast the beginning of your confidence to the end—Strive to enter in at the strait gate—If ye do these things, ye shall never fall—If these things be in you and abound*. We have also a great many cautions, *Quench not the Spirit—Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God—Lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief—Repent, and do your first works, else I will fight against you with the sword of my mouth—* If there be no possibility of final apostacy, all these conditions, to the performers of which the promise is made; and all these cautions are entirely useless.

And a doctrine which nullifies so great part of the Bible cannot be scriptural. Such are some of the unhappy consequences which result from your doctrine of unconditional perseverance; and taken together they are sufficient to awaken a suspicion in the mind respecting their truth. While the believer is thus cautioned against apostacy, he is also encouraged to persevere in the path of obedience by the promises of an eternal inheritance. So far from leaving him in the dreary wilderness of sin, and in the disconsolate maze of doubts and fears, darkness and unbelief, he is prompted to go forth into the land flowing with milk and honey, where faith is in luminous exercise, where holy filial fear operates as a check to presumption, where the light of God's countenance dissipates the clouds of darkness, and where the soul delightfully ranges from field to field, feeding in the rich pastures of redeeming love. "The path of the just is as a shining light, shining more and more to the perfect day." To the believing soul we say, Press on to the fulness of perfect love—to the doubting, Hold fast whereunto ye have attained, watch and pray until Christ speaks to your souls in accents of love—to the penitent, He that cometh to Christ, shall not be cast out—all things are possible to him that believeth. Believe therefore in his power and goodness to save you now—to the halting backslider, Return, ye backsliding children, and the Lord will love you freely, and heal all your backslidings—to the impenitent sinner, Repent and believe in Jesus Christ, and

thou shalt be saved; for *he that believeth not shall be damned*. Is not this scriptural doctrine suited to every character, and full of comfort to believers, as well as terror to unbelievers?

11. P. 125. This doctrine is of use to excite the unbelieving world to pay attention to gospel invitations. We find it applied to this use in the 55th chapter of Isaiah. Were you afraid to quote this passage lest your readers should differ from you respecting its import? "Hearken diligently unto me," saith the Lord by the Prophet, "and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." It is somewhat extraordinary that a text which hath no less than *six conditions expressed* in it, should be produced to prove an *unconditional* perseverance to eternal life! On the latter part of this text I have before made some remarks, see p. 231, of this work. In addition to what is there said, it may be observed, that those with whom the Lord promised to make an everlasting covenant, are 1. To hearken diligently—2. To eat that which is good. Is committing adultery as David did, worshipping idols as did Solomon, making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, as did Hymenus and Philetus, loving this present world, as Demas, and feeding on indwelling sin, as you say all believers do, is this *eating that which is good*? 3. Let your soul delight itself in fatness—

- Do you suppose the prophet meant that they could not forfeit the sure mercies of David “even by their own folly?” (p. 137.) Is backsliding from God, the fatness which the prophet called upon the people to delight in? Indeed, the text under consideration is as full a confutation of your unscriptural doctrine, as is to be found in all the Bible. But perhaps you think that because the covenant is called an *everlasting covenant*, your doctrine is contained in it. This, however, does not follow. For we read in Isa. xxv. 5. “The earth also is defiled with the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinances, *broken the everlasting covenant.*” So that a covenant being called *everlasting*, does not necessarily suppose that its blessings may not be forfeited, by not fulfilling its conditions. The covenant of grace remains immutably the same, through all the vicissitudes of human frailty; but if human, responsible agents refuse to comply with its invariable conditions, they must not expect to enjoy its promised blessings. On the whole, we may safely conclude that your doctrine of infallible and unconditional perseverance, hath no foundation in scripture.

12. “No foundation in scripture!” do you say—
 “Does not the scripture say, ‘My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.’” True—But do you suppose this text proves unconditional perseverance? You might as

well undertake to prove transubstantiation, because Christ said, *I am the bread of life*, as to prove your doctrine of infallible perseverance from the above words. Mark the conditions on which *eternal life* is promised. 1. They *hear my voice*. For not complying with this condition, the disobedient are threatened with everlasting destruction—*I have called, but ye have refused*. 2. *I know them*, that is, *I approve* of them, because they *hear my voice*, and prepare to *follow me*. Having hearkened to the voice of Christ, and prepared themselves, like soldiers who attend to the command of their general, and appear upon the field in full uniform, when inspected they are approved. Then, in the *third* place, They *follow me*. But we read of some, who, when our Lord preached his self-denying doctrine to them, forsook him, and no longer followed him, insomuch that Jesus turned to his Apostles and said, *Will ye also go away?* To follow Jesus Christ, it is necessary to take up the *cross daily*, and persevere to the end of life in well-doing. To such as do this, Christ makes the promise of *eternal life*.

“But if Christ gives them *eternal life*, how can it be lost? Can that which is eternal, perish!” No, no more than gold can perish. But because you have a piece of gold, which is imperishable in its nature, does it follow that you cannot lose it? By no means. You may dispossess yourself of it, although it is still in existence somewhere. To *know God* is said to be *eternal life*. And yet we read

of some, who, “when they *knew* God, glorified him not as God, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts were darkened.” The promise of eternal life is made to obedient, persevering believers ; to those who hear the voice of Christ, who conduct themselves in such a manner as to be approved by him, and who follow him in the narrow way of self-denial. Such are in no danger of *perishing*. To such the promise will be infallibly accomplished. None shall pluck such souls from the hands of Christ. The holy Trinity is engaged to keep all such from falling ; and they shall finally inherit everlasting life at God’s right hand. This is the comfort of the believer, that nothing shall harm him, if he be a follower of *that which is good*. It is not by his own strength that he stands, but by the power of God—that God who has pledged himself to defend them against the power and malice of their enemies, to console their minds in the midst of their temptations and afflictions, and to *strengthen them in the inward man to do his will*.—Fulfil the condition, and the promise is sure.

“Let” then “him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. Behold the goodness and severity of God ; on them which fell, severity ; but toward thee goodness, if thou continue in his goodness ; otherwise thou shalt be cut off.” If the believer persevere in obedient faith and humble love, God has pledged himself to be his defence by night and by day. To such it may be said, *No weapon*

that is formed against them shall prosper. They may triumphantly say, We are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

That we may so pursue in the path of righteousness, that an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom may be administered unto us, is, dear sir, the prayer of yours, &c.

N. BANGS.

REV. S. WILLISTON, *Durham, N. Y.*

Rhinebeck, May 24, 1845.



LETTER VI.

ANIMADVERSIONS ON MR. WILLISTON'S SERMON ON
THE MINISTERS OF SATAN—THE NECESSITY OF
THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT; AND SOME RE-
MARKS ON DISINTERESTED BENEVOLENCE, &c.

Rev. Sir,

1. **H**AVING attended to the five points which were debated, I might now dismiss the controversy, only it seems necessary to make some remarks upon what you have said concerning Satan's transforming himself into an Angel of light. Passing over what you say respecting his character, I come to your improvement, where you very justly assert, p. 192, "Satan has his *religion* as well as his *irreligion* in the world." You then proceed in p. 194, to speak of *Satan's ministers*; but what is very extraordinary, in p. 195 you gravely tell your audience, "no rules can be laid down, by which the hearers can with certainty distinguish between a sanctified and an unsanctified minister;" and yet, astonishing to tell, a few lines below you assert, "And this was a distinguishing characteristic of them, that they prophesied smooth things," and also quote our Lord's words, *By their fruits ye shall know them.*—

Now I should suppose that Satan's minister's would resemble him in some instances at least. And he is unquestionably a propagator of error. But how are we to distinguish between truth and error.—*Truth* is like a straight line, while *error* is self-contradictory. You say, "No rule can be laid down by which" Satan's ministers can be distinguished; and then proceed to give us a "distinguishing characteristic of them?" Which side of this contradiction is true, and which false? for it is morally impossible they should both be true. If no rule can be given by which false ministers are known, how is it that you attempt to describe them? Did you in that instance work without rule? Or did Satan deceive you while composing that discourse?

2. I think we have an infallible criterion by which we may distinguish between the doctrines of Satan, and the doctrines of truth; and it is natural to suppose that Satan's ministers will propagate his doctrine. The first account we have of his doctrine is recorded Gen. iii. 1—5. "And the serpent said unto the woman, ye shall not surely die. For God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Adam and Eve were at this time in the favour of God, possessing his image, and enjoying all the fruits of paradise, one tree excepted, which was interdicted on pain of death.—The devil admitted the prohibition, but denied the consequence resulting from disobedience. May we conclude that his ministers imitate him in this

respect? You acknowledge that God has forbidden sin; and that he has made it our duty, and consequently commanded us to be holy *even as he is holy*; And you assert that a believer does sin in “deed, word, and thought,”—that, although he thus “always sins,” it by no means endangers his salvation, notwithstanding it is prohibited under the severest penalties? Satan enumerated the benefits which should result from partaking of the forbidden fruit, which were two—1. *Their eyes should be opened.* 2. *They should be as gods, knowing good and evil.* In this respect you have gone far beyond him, for you have enumerated *five* benefits which flow from sin in the hearts and lives of Christians. See Sermon 4. p. 88—93. So far you have the honour of agreeing with Satan in the most prominent features of his doctrine. And in this respect also you are equally pointed in contradicting the awful declarations of the *Most High*. He says, *The soul that sinneth it shall die*—but you say indwelling sin shall make the soul eternally more penitent and thankful in heaven! God saith, *I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked*—You say, he hath decreed every event that ever did, or ever will take place, and that his decrees are according to his pleasure. Now among the multifarious events which take place, the death of the wicked is one, which you say, is according to God’s pleasure; whereas he saith, *I have no pleasure in it*. Is this a “distinguishing characteristic” of a *minister of Satan*, to contradict the Almighty!!

3. In regard to the *religion of Satan*, it doubtless assimilates itself more or less to the doctrine he teaches. And we have seen that it is an effect of his subtlety to acknowledge *part* of the truth, in order to make way for his falsehood: so we may expect that he will teach the necessity of some good, or otherwise he could not so easily deceive. It is highly probable therefore that his ministers will assert that “sinning is not the whole a good man doeth; he also *doeth good*, and is possessed of a good heart,” p. 101. Such a remark would be quite seasonable, if it had been previously affirmed that every man “always sins in deed, word, and thought;” otherwise the reader might suppose that “sinning was the whole which a good man” did.—I know not how Satan could devise a more deceptive religion. *Some good* is admitted to make it appear somewhat like the righteous religion of the Lord Jesus; but *much sin* is insisted upon, to make it congenial to the depraved taste of fallen man.—If mankind are fond of a religion suited to their sinful nature, it is reasonable to suppose they will seek one that permits them to foster the evils of their heart, such as “pride, self-seeking, hardness of heart, unbelief,” &c. If the reader wishes to see a description of such a system of religion, he may find it painted to the life in your sermon on “sinful imperfection.” In this respect, I think you have, I hope undesignedly, given a dangerous stroke to the *pure and undefiled* religion of the Lord Jesus. But by admitting the truth of one of your remarks,

which I shall not, at present, controvert, you may be acquitted from *designing* any mischief; for you say, "Satan when transformed into an Angel of light, has not deceived himself,"—"but his ministers may be, and often are, self-deceived," p. 194. If this be so, you may be "self-deceived"—and by admitting the truth of another peculiar trait of your system, you may also be absolved from all blame—I mean that which saith "God deceives, blinds, and hardens people." But notwithstanding all your "apparent" zeal for God, so far as you have been engaged in preaching in *favour of sin*, and have thus aided the cause of Satan, it would not do to transfer your fault to God, who is of too pure eyes to behold iniquity.

4. It appears also to be the work of Satan to make people believe a *lie*. To effect this, we may suppose he would excite ministers to make reprobates believe that Christ died for them, that they might not see the *injustice* of their condemnation.—This, it is confessed, would be a difficult task; first, to make them believe that "just so many" were, from all eternity, reprobated; and secondly, that Christ died to atone for their sins that they might be saved! If Satan can infuse sophistical subtlety enough into any man to enable him to persuade people to believe this, he will prove himself one of the most consummate artists in deception imaginable. And in this case, I think you yourself would be willing to admit that there is one thing

brought about by Satan, and no longer insist that "every thing is brought to pass by the Almighty."*

5. Another attempt of Satan, one would suppose, would be to slander the ministers of Christ, by calling them false apostles, deceitful workers, &c. in order thereby to circumscribe their usefulness. And as you justly assert, he generally appears in disguise, it is not to be concluded he will come out plain, but rather influence some minister, under the garb of friendship, to give some broad hints, and secret stabs, that his design may not be discovered. If any such ministers should live in a country where there are no professors of *idolatry*, no *Mohamids*, and but few *Papists*, he might summons up courage enough to pronounce positively, (although "no rule can be given to know certainly") that *Polytheism*, *Mohamidism*, and *Popery* are all supported by "ministers of Satan,"—yet he dare not come out plainly and honestly, and revile the true minis-

* P. 190. "In this snare, he" (Satan) "has, no doubt, caught, and destroyed thousands of immortal souls." Is it not truly surprising, that Satan should be accused of ruining souls, by one, who so strenuously maintains that God had unchangably secured their destruction before they came into existence! What souls does Satan destroy? not the elect certainly. And as to the reprobates, they were never in a salvable state. It is presumed that the destruction of "thousands of immortal souls" is an event—and you say all events are brought to pass by the Almighty. What then has Satan to do in producing such an awful event, as the destruction of thousands of souls. So forcible are right words, that let a man defend error never so zealously, they will lead him sometimes to contradict it,

ters of Christ, by calling *them* ministers of Satan, for fear of giving offence, and thereby lose his popularity. But under the disguise of friendship, and of great concern for fear they should deceive some of those who he thinks were from all eternity elected to everlasting life, and therefore beyond the influence of such deception as can endanger their salvation, he modestly hints they are ministers of Satan. He designs, however, that his hints should be understood.

[Perhaps, it might be thought, an apology is due for the pointed manner in which the preceding remarks are made. I do not design them to apply indiscriminately to the Hopkinsian ministers; for I doubt not but there are many worthy men of that order. Neither would I insinuate that Mr. Williston is a wicked minister of Satan. From the small and superficial acquaintance I had with him, I formed a favourable opinion of his piety. But so far as he, or any one else, pleads for sin in the hearts of believers all their days, and so long as they maintain that God, the author of all good, is the *efficient cause of sin*,—in these respects, I sincerely think they aid the cause of Satan. If God be the efficient cause of sin, and if it be brought to pass by him, certainly Satan, and all sinners are completely exculpated from all blame: and what more could Satan wish or desire, than to transfer his own guilt, and the guilt of all his children, from himself and from them, to God.

It ought furthermore to be recollected that Mr. W. has been unreasonably censorious in his sermons. And the reader is not at a loss to know who he means by ministers of Satan. This consideration ought to palliate for my offence, if indeed I have committed one. I could not express myself otherwise without disguising my real sentiments, which would be an unpardonable offence. When the *peculiarities* of his system are lost sight of, he then speaks like a christian minister. It is his *system* therefore, which he is not the author of, that has beguiled him into his inconsistencies, and not the badness of his heart. And I sincerely pray that he may be convinced of its errors, and that he will yet embrace the pure doctrines of Christ, unshakled by the fetters of Hopkinsianism.]

5. What you have said respecting false conversions, I consider not applicable to us as a body; for we no more place the evidence of conversions in dreams, smells, visionary appearances, and applications of particular texts of scripture, &c. than we consider it essential to salvation, to believe in unconditional election and reprobation—although it is possible for God to work on men's hearts by any, or all these ways.

6. We agree with you, that a truly converted man has the image of God stamped upon his heart. But pray, how am I to know whether I have this holy image or not? It certainly is no visible, tangible thing. It must, therefore, in the nature of things, be a spiritual work, and of course

spiritually discerned. And it were to be wished, that, among all the negative marks you have mentioned, you had given some positive signs of a genuine conversion. It is true, you say it may be known to God, and to the person himself; but you give no mark by which it may be known, otherwise than by saying, "Regeneration is a real change of heart from *sin* to *holiness*." But holiness is a very vague term, and needs much explanation to understand it.* After all you have said to convince your readers that Satan can transform himself into a *good angel*, you acknowledge in p. 223, that "Although Satan is transformed into an angel of light, he never impresses the divine image on any of his converts." This is undoubtedly true.

* *Αγιος*, (*agios*) the word rendered *holy*, signifies to *separate from the earth*, or *not of the earth*. Hence any thing which is consecrated, from earthly purposes, to the particular service of God, is denominated *holy*. Hence also, ministers, churches and their furniture, are called *holy*. On this account the Jewish priests and their vestments, under the law, the land of Palestine, the temple and all its utensils, as they were especially devoted to God, and his chosen people, they were called *holy*. But as the word is applied to Christians, it imports that all the powers of soul and body are solemnly dedicated to God. The *internal principle of holiness* which is implanted in the heart by the holy Spirit applying the merits of Christ, by which a thorough renovation is effected, is productive of *external holiness*—A *holy* walking with God, and an *holy*, upright deportment in every relation of life. When the soul enjoys this *principle of holiness*, and exhibits its correspondent tempers and conduct, there is the *abiding witness of the Spirit*, which is connected with a *knowledge* of our acceptance in the sight of God.

But in page 190, you insist on the possibility of his changing himself into an angel of LOVE, and say, that he can counterfeit *love*, as well as other graces. If so, may he not counterfeit holiness? Does not St. John say, *God is love; and they that dwell in love dwell in God, and God in them?* Is not *love*, therefore, one of the brightest traits of the divine image? And if Satan can counterfeit love, I see no reason why he may not counterfeit holiness also; and thus make people believe they have the “divine image impressed upon them,” when, indeed, they have it not. From your account of conversion, and its evidence, I can discover no just criterion by which a person may distinguish between true and false conversions. How then can a person determine whether he be deceived or not?

7. Taking it for granted that there is great danger of being deceived in regard to the new birth, there is, I believe, nevertheless, infallible marks, by which a man may know whether he be justified or not. The Lord Jesus saith, *Ye must be born again.* This, it is admitted, implies a radical change—and to suppose a man can experience this great renovation, and yet be totally ignorant of it, is as unreasonable as to suppose a man could be taken from a dungeon, and brought under the meridian sun, without a knowledge of it. St. Paul saith, Rom. viii. 15, 16. “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our

spirits, that we are the children of God." St. John also saith, 1 John v. 10, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." Again, 1 Cor. ii. 12. "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we *might know* the things which are freely given to us of God." Here then is the *direct* witness of the Spirit, *bearing witness with our spirits*, that we *are the children of God*; and it is said to be given for this purpose, that we might *know* the things which are freely given us of God. Gal. v. 22—25, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." In these words we have the *indirect* witness of the Spirit, denominated its *fruits*; which cannot exist where the *direct* evidence is wanting, no more than there can be fruit on a tree destitute of life—for the Spirit is a *Spirit of life*. Rom. viii. 2. "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your *fruit unto holiness*, and the end everlasting life." According to this declaration of the Apostle, those who have their *fruit unto holiness*, are first made *free from sin*. John xv. 14. *Ye are my friends, if ye keep my commandments*. From these passages of sacred scripture, we perceive that the christian has a three-fold testimony, all agreeing to witness to the same fact, viz. that he is an heir of God, a servant and friend of Jesus Christ.

1. The *direct* witness of the Spirit, which bears witness with his spirit that he is born of God.—
 2. Its *indirect* witness which are its fruits. 3. His external deportment, called keeping the commandments, which perfectly corresponds to the internal dispositions of the heart. Where these evidences are found, the person cannot be deceived. And where are we to seek for them, but in our own hearts and lives? You suppose, “peace, joy and hope,” are no evidences of conversion, p. 205. It is granted, that a man may be joyful, may have a *false* peace, and a *fallacious* hope, while unregenerated; but a regenerated man has righteousness, *peace and joy in the Holy Ghost*. “Being justified by faith, we have *peace* with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,”—and the fruit of the Spirit is *love, joy, peace, &c.* So that, although a man may be deceived by an imaginary *peace, &c.* it is nevertheless certain, that *true peace, holy joy, and divine love*, are infallible evidences of our union with God, through faith in the Lord Jesus.

8. If, after a sinner has been awakened to see the depravity of his heart, and the sinfulness of his life, having had a discovery of the holiness and spirituality of the divine law, which excited in him a godly sorrow for sin; and also has been led to a discovery of the infinite merits of the Lord Jesus, who bore the curse for him—If, I say, he has been brought to this view of things, and then experienced a removal of his guilt upon his believing in Jesus Christ as his Saviour, and if *divine joy, love,*

and *peace* succeed his grief and sorrow, so that he feels love to God and is reconciled to his commandments,—he has a right to conclude himself justified, even though he should afterwards become an apostate. For president *Edwards* and Dr. *Bellamy*, to whom you refer, drew many of their conclusions respecting apostacy, from the mistaken notion, that a person once justified, can never finally fall. Hence they inferred that all apostates turned away from the “appearance of piety” only—That all such were either deceived, or were wilful hypocrites.—Let a man therefore examine himself, not by an imaginary something, called conversion, but by the infallible marks before mentioned, and if he have them let him hold fast whereunto he hath attained, and ardently press forward to the fulness of redeeming love.

9. Permit me also to make a few observations upon your sermon on the distinction between the regenerate, and the unregenerate. According to your representation, the “dividing line” between them is, the one has a supreme regard to self, and the other a supreme regard to God. This may be accurate enough: but the way in which you express yourself about “disinterested benevolence,” has a tendency to perplex the mind. “Disinterested benevolence” is a phrase often used by the Hopkinsonian writers, and it sounds very pleasing to the ear, but it is something to which man is a total stranger. It is manifest from the concurrent testimony of holy scripture, that all the designs of God towards fallen

man, are not only for the exhibition of his own infinite glory, but also for the happiness of his intelligent creatures. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Here the *end* for which God gave his Son a propitiation for the sins of the world, is said to be, that mankind might be saved. Accordingly, when a man seeks his own salvation, if he seek agreeable to the method proposed in the gospel, he seeks the glory of God; and when he seeks the glory of God, he also seeks his own happiness; for the glory of God, and the happiness of men are two points, which ultimately concentrate, and in practice can never be separated.* To talk, therefore, about ab-

* This doctrine of *disinterested benevolence*, has led some Hopkinsian writers to affirm, that in order to be saved, a sinner must be willing to be damned. "God has revealed it to be his will to punish some of mankind forever. You know not but you are one of them. Whether you shall be saved or damned depends entirely upon his will; and supposing he sees it most for his glory, and the general good, that you should be damned, it is certainly his will that you should be damned. On this supposition, then, you ought to be willing to be damned; for not to be willing to be damned, in this case, is opposing God's will, instead of saying, *thy will be done.*"

"Without which submission it is impossible a man should be saved." "So there is no other way for us, not to turn enemies to God ourselves, but to be willing that some of our fellow men should be enemies to him for ever." "But as soon as we cease to be thus willing to be given up to sin, we are given up, and turned enemies to God and all good." Contrast between Calvinism and Hopkinsianism, p. 191.

stracting ourselves, so as to have no regard to our own happiness, is an idle theory, having no foundation in scripture, and is utterly repugnant to common sense. That we are to deny ourselves of *all ungodliness and worldly lusts*, and take up our daily cross, is a scriptural and rational doctrine : but that we are to do this without any regard to our present and eternal happiness, is no where recorded in scripture, nor can it be concluded from our relation to God, as our Creator and Redeemer. So far from

How inconsistent these sentiments ? If any *be saved*, God is willing they *should be saved*. In this case then, to be *willing* to be *damned*, is to be willing *to be*, what God is not willing we *should be* ; that is, to be willing to *oppose* God's will ! For to say, that God is not willing to save those who *are saved*, is to say that he saves them *against* his will, which is too great an absurdity for any one to believe.

Is it not very extraordinary that any one should deliberately assert, that in order to be *reconciled* to God, we must be willing to be *enemies* to him forever ! To be saved, we must be willing to be at eternal enmity to God ! Such shocking and unscriptural opinions carry sufficient evidence of their own absurdity. They are here cited to shew to what lengths some men have gone in their wild, fantastic notions.

A theological problem for the metaphysical divine to solve.

Mr. Williston affirms, That the dividing line between the *regenerate* and the *unregenerate* is, the one has a *supreme regard to self*, and the other, a *supreme regard for God*—that sin consists in *selfishness*—that consequently the distinguishing mark of a christian is *disinterested benevolence*—and yet that the *best* of men do *always* sin in deed, word, and thought—Where then is *disinterested benevolence* ? If *none* are Christians, but those who have *disinterested benevolence* ; and if all are so *selfish as always to sin*, where is *his Christian* ?

it, that we are commanded to love our neighbour only as we love ourselves. The will of God is the supreme rule, by which the conduct of all intelligent creatures, should be regulated—But God *wills* the present and future happiness of his rational creatures; and therefore we should will and seek the same. That selfish principle which prompts an individual to seek his own happiness *only*, without any regard to the happiness of his fellow-creatures, to be sure, is repugnant to the spirit of christianity. The truly philanthropic soul, actuated by the love of God and man, will rejoice in the temporal and spiritual prosperity of others, as well as in his own—and when the glory of God frustrates any of his preconceived opinions or schemes, he is willing to relinquish these opinions and schemes, not only because they are inconsistent with the glory of God, but also, because they are incompatible with his own happiness.

The Apostle Paul saith, *For no man ever yet hated his own flesh*, Gal. ii. 17. But the Hopkinsian idea of *disinterested benevolence*, which declares that a man must be willing to be damned, in order to be saved, teaches us to hate our own flesh. That it is utterly impossible for man to be *actuated* by such a principle is fully evident. No man can be actuated by a principle that he does not possess. And to be *disinterested*, is to have *no interest* in our welfare. But to have *no interest* in a thing, is to be wholly *indifferent* about it, that is, to have no concern about it. And can a man *act* from a principle

in which he takes *no interest*, concerning which he is *entirely indifferent*, and which he *feels not to operate in his heart*? Is not this nearly the same as to say a man is *greatly interested* in that in which he feels *entirely disinterested*? How far is this removed from a contradiction?

To propose the *general good of the human family* as a motive to the human mind, is to teach an unsuitable lesson to a *finite* mind. Who but the infinite God can have such comprehensive views of all things, as to know, in every case, what is best for the general and universal good? Certainly no finite mind is adequate to take such a comprehensive survey of universal existence, as to know what line of conduct will best conduce to the *good of all*. So circumscribed is our knowledge, that we are frequently at a loss how to act for the best, as it respects those things which immediately concern ourselves, and our own acquaintance. Much less can we ascend to that summit of wisdom, as to know what will be best for the “great whole” of intelligent existence. The motive therefore being beyond the reach of man, he cannot be influenced by it. He is dazzled, overpowered, and lost in the variety, the complexity, and the immensity of the object. To seek the good of “being in general,” I must have a knowledge of “being in general.”—But to such knowledge I cannot hope to attain; and therefore I must be totally discouraged from ever acting from an acceptable motive. And what does the untutored savage, or the child ten years old,

know about your system of disinterested benevolence? And is it impossible they should have their hearts right with God, until they are initiated into all the subtleties of your “new divinity?”

If every individual of the human family were to seek his own happiness, and the happiness of his neighbour, according to the directions of scripture, by repenting, believing, and loving God, and by *dispersing abroad*, giving to the poor, clothing the naked, &c. according to the best of his ability, then the universal good would be realized. This is the way, and the only way which the scriptures point out for the regulation of man’s conduct.

Where is disinterested benevolence to be found? Not in *God* surely. *He* seeks the manifestation of his *own glory*, in all his works and ways. And his glory is exhibited in *Creation, Redemption, Salvation*, and in his superintending providence over the works of his hands; and it is so evident, as to need but little proof, that in *creation, redemption, and salvation*, he connects his own glory with the happiness of his intelligent creatures. All those, therefore, who make the *will of God* the rule of their conduct, seeking their own happiness according to its directions, seek also the glory of God, and the happiness of the universe. But here is no such disinterested love, as makes a man willing to go to hell, and be at eternal enmity against God, for the good of “being in general!” Such strange inconsistencies are not recognized by Christianity.

10. That a Christian may have an eye to his eternal reward in all he does, is also abundantly demonstrated from scripture. *Labour not*, said Jesus Christ, *for the meat which perisheth, but for the meat which shall endure unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give you.* Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter—because he *had respect to the recompense of reward.* And that bright cloud of witnesses, exhibited in the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews, all declared by their obedient faith, that they *sought a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.* Whatsoever was *right*, was promised to those who *stood idle*, to induce them to enter into the vineyard and labour. The danger of apostacy is also mentioned by the inspired writers, to guard christians against sin,—“Let us fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.” “Let us labour, therefore, to enter into that rest, lest any man fall, after the same example of unbelief.” What example of unbelief was this, but that of the Israelites, who fell in the wilderness, because they disbelieved God, and his servant Moses? “They did all drink,” says Paul, “the same spiritual drink, (for they drank of that spiritual rock which followed them; and that rock was Christ.) But with many of them God was not well-pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness. NOW THESE THINGS WERE OUR ENSAMPLES, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.” These awful exam-

ples of apostacy, and the fearful punishment which followed, are recorded upon the page of inspiration, to guard believers in all ages, against similar acts of rebellion. We may speculate as much as we please, but it is difficult to reason against facts.— They remain, and will forever remain an immovable barrier against the hypothetical speculations of the mere theorist. Believing, loving, and obeying are the invariable conditions of the covenant of grace ; and it is on the performance of these, that our present and eternal salvation is suspended. In this the divine goodness is most eminently illustrated, in condescending to bestow eternal life on conditions so *light and easy* to be performed. There is indeed, no proportion, comparatively speaking, between the conditions required, and the blessings promised ; and therefore our present and future salvation is, in the most emphatical sense of the word, of *grace*. It was an act of amazing condescension of God, so to fix and reveal the terms of salvation, that feeble, ignorant man, could understand and comply with them. And the divine goodness is no less conspicuous in promising the reward of eternal life, to incite the Christian to diligence in running the *race set before him*. In these respects we behold the revelation of God, and the dispensation of grace, suited to the capacity and circumstances of man. “ O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out.”

CONCLUSION.

1. **LET** us now for a moment, review the doctrines which have been the subject of investigation. Consider the proposition which ascribes all events to God, as their *efficient cause*. To establish this fundamental point of your system, you are under the necessity of excluding every other agent from the universe, only as they are used as necessary instruments to execute the pre-ordained purposes of the divine mind. Aware that mankind are responsible for their conduct, you are forced to admit, in words, their free-agency; although by such admission you fly directly in the face of your former proposition; for the two propositions are utterly irreconcilable and contradictory. If the first be true, the other is undeniably false; if the latter be true, the former falls before it. It may, however, be said, "We believe them both, although they are contradictory." This is impossible. That we may believe things mysterious and incomprehensible, is granted—but there is a vast difference between subjects which are mysterious and incomprehensible, and those which are self-contradictory, and therefore subversive of each other. The former, when supported by evidence, command our faith

and veneration; the latter shock our reason, and excite unbelief and disgust. Moreover, if propositions contradictory one to the other, claim our assent, there is an embargo laid upon all rational investigation; and we no longer have any clue to guide the mind in her inquiries after truth. Nay, it destroys all distinction between truth and error, and presents an impassable barrier against the progress of the human mind in the pursuit of evidence. If I may believe both sides of a contradiction true, in one instance, I also may in every other instance; and hence I may believe a thing *true* and *false* at the same time—I may believe it *cold* and *hot*, *wet* and *dry*, at the same time, in the same place—In fine, I may believe or not believe, as whim and fancy dictate, without any regard to truth and error.—This is one unhappy tendency of your doctrine.

2. Another no less fatal is, that it destroys all distinction between virtue and vice. If all actions are decreed, and all tend to the same ultimate end, as you assert they do, then all are equally good in their place and in their order. How can that be criminal in the sight of God, which is perfectly according to his pleasure, and viewed in the aggregate, “infinitely pleasing to him?” According to your system, all things, good and bad, by a regular concatenation of causes and events, are tending to the same end, which is the greatest possible perfection of the “great whole,”—And if so, then the apostacy of Angels and man, the adultery of David, the idolatry of Solomon, the treachery of Judas,

with all other sins, were as necessary for the consummate perfection "of the universe," as was the holiness of Enoch, the faith of Abraham, the purity, sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, and all the christian virtues of all other prophets and apostles, saints and martyrs. What a flood-gate does this awful doctrine hoist for the overflowing of ungodliness! and what a motive does it exhibit for the vicious to go on *greedily in sin*. Must it not be the duty of every man who sees between truth and error, to lift up his voice against a system, fraught with such mischief to mankind?

3. Another ill tendency of your doctrine is, that it makes void the law of God. You intimate that the decrees and commands are opposed one to the other. Our Saviour saith, *A house divided against itself cannot stand*. And if the decrees and commands are in opposition one to the other, one or the other must fall—consequently, if your doctrine of irresistible decrees stands, the commands must fall. And here also, it is proper to observe, that all restraints are taken off from the vicious. If you urge the prohibitory commands of God to a vicious-man, initiated into your doctrine, he may justly reply, "The commands are of no consequence to me—all events are decreed; and my conduct is an event, which, although contrary to the law of God, is, nevertheless, decreed, and therefore according to his pleasure. Why should I trouble myself about my conduct, since all my thoughts and actions are as much beyond my control, as the movement of

the planetary system." It would be in vain for you to tell him such conduct is forbidden; for if there be a secret decree opposing the command, you know not but his wicked conduct is as agreeable to the pleasure of God, as your reproof. Indeed both, on your principle, are according to a hidden counsel, over which neither of you have any control.

4. It not only destroys the binding influence of the law, but it also renders useless the whole system of revelation, gospel as well as law. If the decrees are contrary to the law, they may also be, for aught you know, opposed to the gospel likewise.— If we are not to be guided by revelation to know the mind of God in one case, can you assign any satisfactory reason why we should be in the other? If God command one thing, and decree in direct opposition to it, why may he not also promise one thing and yet decree never to accomplish it? This dreadful consequence of your system carries us back to the ages beyond the flood; nay, we are landed in the dark shades of infidelity, where we must group in the impenetrable gloom of uncertainty and doubt. I would not willingly fix an unfair consequence upon the doctrine of an antagonist.— But this shocking inference, it appears to me, flows as naturally from the principle I oppose, as the stream does from its fountain. Indeed if man be compelled by a secret, almighty power in all he does, he is no more actuated by external motives,

by commands or promises, nor by any part of revelation, than the *ship driven by the fierce wind*.

5. Let us call to mind also your doctrine of unconditional election to eternal life, and reprobation to eternal death. To see the inconsistency of this part of your system, it is necessary to view it in connexion with your ideas of atonement. You acknowledge Christ died for all the human race.—I have before observed that your system, in this respect, is far worse than old calvinism, which, to be sure, is bad enough. The latter limits the atonement to the elect only; and in this instance, it is consistent with itself, although repugnant to the express declarations of scripture. But Hopkinsianism, with an *inconsistency peculiar to itself*, represents God as fore-ordaining, before the foundation of the world, the eternal destruction of part of mankind, without any regard to their wicked works foreseen; and yet it asserts, that Jesus Christ actually atoned for those identical reprobates for whom God the Father never had thoughts of mercy! It has been already observed, that these jarring sentiments set God the Father and God the Son at variance, and therefore cannot be true. The doctrine of personal and irrespective reprobation, is totally irreconcilable with the universal atonement of Christ. But the latter sentiment is so fully asserted in scripture, that it has constrained you and other Hopkinsian divines, to yield to its truth. Yet the horrid decree of reprobation cannot be given up. You are then driven to an inconsistency, ut-

terly incredible, that Christ died to save those who were from all eternity doomed to eternal burnings ! As you have acknowledged, in the full blaze of truth, the universality of the atonement, I entertain a faint hope that you will yet give up unconditional reprobation, and be a consistent *Methodist*. You start at this idea, I suppose, thinking it would ruin your credit. And so, in all probability it would among bigots. The candid, however, will applaud your frankness—and I have no doubt but the Lord Jesus would smile to see you extricated from your discordant system.

6. Another inconsistency originating from the one last mentioned is, that you invite all to come to Christ, and obtain life, telling them it is their own fault if they do not come. The fault, it is intimated, is in their will, called a “moral inability.” What an absurdity, thus to mock those creatures, who, according to another part of your system, are bound by an irrevocable decree of reprobation, by telling them they may come to Christ if they will ! Were you sufficiently powerful and crafty, to bind one half of your parishioners to their houses with a cord that could be neither cut nor broken ; and then send a messenger to tell them they may come “if they will,” and hear you warn the *elect* against being deceived and ruined, by the “ministers of Satan,” do you think they would have much confidence in your *sincerity* ? It would not make you altogether irreproachable for your messenger to tell them, “the meeting house is sufficiently large, seats

are provided for you all, and Mr. W. has a voice loud enough to make you all hear, therefore arise and come." They would still, frequently think of their cords, and of the man who bound them.—And what, if after all, you should instruct your messenger to inform them, that you never meant they should come? but that you bound them for the benevolent purpose of benefiting those whom your great clemency had dragged to church—that they were deprived of hearing your sermons, for the good of the "great whole" of all your parishioners! But this is a faint comparison. Your reprobates would only suffer the galling of the cords a short time, and be deprived of hearing the caution against being deceived by false ministers, although you had determined to deceive them yourself. But those whom you suppose God reprobated, are, according to your notion, doomed to never-ending torments for fulfilling the secret will of heaven, and for suffering Satan, or his ministers, to deceive them—although, according to your system, God had determined to deceive them, by telling them, or by instructing ministers to tell them, that they may come to Christ if they will, when at the same time they can no more *will to come*, than they can reverse the immutable laws of heaven and earth!—Why then tell them that they can come if they will? Is not this tantalizing them with false appearances?

7. To say that men have power, *naturally* to love God, while they have a "moral inability," is a manifest contradiction. *Inability* supposes a want

of *power* : and therefore to say that a man has *power* to do a thing, and at the same time contend that there is an *inability* to do that thing, is saying that a man *has power*, and yet *has not power*. Let the *inability* be *natural* or *moral*, it is certain that, so long as that inability remains, the sinner has not power to comply with the requirements of the divine law. That man has all the faculties of soul and body, generally speaking, to understand and to do the will of God, when enlightened and assisted by divine grace, is granted. But that he can know and do this, abstract from the grace of God, is evidently repugnant to scripture. *Without me*, says Christ, *ye can do nothing. Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.* Without the illumination of God's Spirit, we cannot understand his mind respecting us. Hence it is said, *The eyes of your understanding being enlightened ; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, &c.* It is therefore unscriptural and unreasonable to declare to sinners that they have power naturally to obey God, and at the same time contend that they have a "moral inability" to obey him. And is it not absurd to say that men have *natural*, but no *moral* power, to do *moral duties* ! "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit, for they are foolishness unto him : neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. ii. 14. When the *natural* and *moral* man are contradistinguished, the one signifies an *unregenerate*, the other a *regenerate* man. Hence to say a man has

natural power to love God, is to say that he can love God while *unregenerated*; and yet, *because he is unregenerated*, he *cannot* love God!

8. It would seem that this doctrine respecting man's having *natural power* to love God, without the aid of divine grace, has been adopted to vindicate the *justice of God*, in the condemnation of the reprobates, from whom the grace of repentance and faith is withheld. A little attention, however, to this subject, will enable us to see the fallacy of this reasoning. The "moral inability," which always accompanies this "natural ability," is a consequence of *Adam's sin*; and this *sin*, is an effect of an eternal decree of God. God therefore, from all eternity, decreed that the reprobates should be held under the iron yoke of a "moral inability," to do good. While they are thus acting, they are acting under the influence of a principle for which they are no more accountable, than the quádruped is for not walking upon two feet, instead of four. While therefore this doctrine holds up the *semblance* of justice in the condemnation of the reprobate, when that *semblance* is removed, the most glaring *injustice* appears in full view. For, as long as this "moral inability" remains, the sinner can no more repent and believe, than he can break the eternal decree of God, which, the advocates of this doctrine contend will *irresistibly* take effect. What *Justice* can there be in punishing a man for not doing an *impossibility*. Do you say "It is not *impossible*, because the sinner has *natural power* to do

what God requires, but *will not*." But do you not suppose that the reason why he *will not*, is because of his *indisposition*, or *moral inability*? Put a man into a dungeon, who has all his natural functions complete, and exclude all light from him, can he see, merely because he has the faculty of sight? You know he cannot. And neither can the reprobate believe in Christ and love God, without divine *grace*, even though it should be granted that he has *natural ability* so to do. And this *grace* you suppose, is never bestowed upon the reprobate. How then can he repent and love God? If it still be contended that he *can* repent and love God without grace, it follows, that the reprobate may become the elect, and finally enter heaven *without grace*. What an astonishment would be excited among the heavenly hosts, to see a *graceless, reprobated monster*, shouting the praises of free, electing grace, (to which he is not indebted) before the throne of God! Do you say, impossible: but why not? If the reprobate has all the *natural ability* to love God *without divine grace*, and therefore *can* do it, where is the impossibility? I suppose it will be said, because it is *morally* impossible. Be it so. Then we have a case *possible*, and *impossible*, at the *same time*! The reprobate *can* love God with all his heart, and yet *cannot* at the same time!! And is the *justice* of God magnified in tormenting intelligent beings in hell forever, for not doing that which is *possible* and *impossible* at the *same time*? Can any man of common sense persuade himself

that such manifest contradictions will be believed by rational beings?

If the reprobate possesses *natural power* to love God, and therefore *can* love him, independent of redeeming grace, then the decree of reprobation is *resistible*, and will not take effect, and of course the doctrine of *definite reprobation* is false. If he *cannot* love God, on account of *moral inability*, then the former sentiment respecting *natural ability* is erroneous. The fact is, they are *both erroneous*.—*Christ died for all men*. All *may* and *can* repent and love God, if they will, and be saved with everlasting life, through the *merits of Christ* and the agency of the *Holy Ghost*.

“But if all the temporal and spiritual favours we enjoy are of *grace*, then it would be *just* in God to withhold them.” Granted; but He can no more cease to be *good*, than he can to be *just*: and although *justice* does not *require* an exercise of goodness, yet it does not *prevent* the operation of goodness. As long therefore as God remains *good*, he cannot withhold favours from those who have not entirely forfeited them, by *wickedly abusing* them.

It may, however, be said, “That if it be *just* not to bestow blessings upon the unregenerate, it is *just* to require obedience *without them*.” And suppose this were granted also, it would make nothing in favour of the sentiment here exploded: for it would certainly be an impeachment of *goodness* to require us to eat *without food*, or to *labour* without any *utensils*, or to repent and believe in Christ *without grace*.

Goodness being an *essential* property of the divine nature, God can no more cease to exercise it towards proper objects of it, than he can cease to be *just*. Although therefore, he is under no obligation from *justice* to bless his creatures with *moral ability* to do *moral* actions, he is under an obligation from *goodness*, which is no less certain in its exercise than *justice*. Neither does the exercise of *goodness* supplant *justice*, there being no *injustice* in the exercise of *goodness*. To be *just*, and not *good*, is to be *cruel*—to be *good*, and not *just*, is to be *partial*—to be *just* and *good* both, is to be *impartial* and *merciful*.

9. In regard to your insinuation that Methodist Preachers are ministers of Satan, a review of our doctrine and practice from our first rise to the present time, will be a sufficient refutation of all such uncharitable slanders. We have done nothing in secret,—Our doctrines and discipline have been published to the world; and our characters and conduct have been exposed to the eye, not only of the Christian and candid part of the community, but also to the vicious and malevolent. It is true, we have had the misfortune to have men among us sometimes, whose principles and characters were found to be bad; but when discovered, if incorrigible, they were legally dismissed. And would to God we were the only people who have to lament this evil. Let those *who are without sin* in this respect, *cast the first stone*.

10. Whether our doctrines are such as deserve to be ranked among the doctrines of Satan or not, the intelligent reader who has consulted them, must determine. If indeed, we taught sinners that all their crimes were an effect of an uncontrollable decree, over which they can have no influence, and against which it is needless to contend, thereby charging “all the sins in the universe” on the God of immaculate purity, completely exculpating man from all blame, there might be some reason to suspect that our doctrine had an unholy origin. For there can be little doubt, but that one design of Satan is, to clear himself and his children, and to impeach the character of Deity. And what more effectual method he could devise to do this, than to teach that all the abominable acts in the universe were fore-ordained and brought to pass by the Almighty, it is difficult to conceive. Our doctrine, however, is directly the reverse of this. We teach that God governs the world in wisdom and goodness, so that sin is not produced by him; although he overrules sinners, by restraining, checking, and in many instances turning the evil propensities of their hearts in a different channel from what they intended.—We believe that man, who was created holy, and perfectly qualified to fill the distinguished station he occupied in the creation, conformably to the *will* of his Creator, was free to act according to that *will* or not—that he chose the latter, and thereby plunged himself into sin, which drew upon him and upon his posterity the curse of God. To res-

cue man from this deplorable condition, Jesus Christ, the second Adam, undertook our cause, assumed our nature, and suffered in our stead, by which he made a complete atonement for the sins of the whole world. If any therefore are finally reprobated, it is not because Jesus Christ did not die for them, nor because they were eternally excluded from the benefits of his death by a decree of God; but because they voluntarily reject the offers of pardon and salvation. Herein the justice of God is rescued from the charge of cruelty, and the goodness of God from the impeachment of partiality.—The scriptural doctrine of election which we teach, flows from the unbounded goodness of God, runs through the infinite merits of Christ, and through the agency of the Holy Spirit, communicates its reviving influence to the hearts of all who fulfil the condition of justification here, which is believing in Christ with *an heart unto righteousness*. Such is the adorable fitness of this sublime doctrine, that, when scripturally viewed, we perceive it perfectly harmonizes all the divine attributes of wisdom, justice, power, and goodness.

11. Or, if we taught mankind they must live in sin all the days of their lives; and that pride, impenitence and unbelief, would promote humility, lowliness, faith, and gratitude; the unbiassed and thinking part of the christian world, might be allowed to suspect that our understandings were a little shaded by *the smoke from the bottomless pit*; or that our reasoning faculties were somewhat impair-

ed by too close an alliance with the prince of darkness. But our doctrine is opposed to this. It has been our principal aim to preach against sin of every kind, not even excepting self-righteousness, of which you seem afraid we are too fond. Indeed it was for his opposition to this satanic principle that the Rev. J. Wesley was so violently opposed in the commencement of his widely extended ministerial labours. We continually press upon sinners the necessity of salvation by grace through faith—that the love of God must be shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost—and that justified believers must continually *grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ*. In order to this they must watch and pray, and “live by faith in the Son of God, who hath loved us, and given himself for us, an offering well pleasing in the sight of God.” Is this the doctrine of Satan !

12. As it respects the ministerial labours, the Christian experience and practice of the Methodist ministry, I have no apprehension that it would suffer from a comparison with any christian church on earth. Look at the christian world when the Lord first raised up, and sent out the Methodist ministers, and compare its state *then*, in regard to doctrine, experience and practice, with its present condition. Since that period the peculiar and distinguished doctrines of the gospel, *salvation by grace through faith in Christ*, and *holiness of heart and life*, have taken an extensive range, not only through Great-Britain, and the United States of America, but also

to the West-India islands, to the East-Indies, to Africa, and many other parts of the world. It is true, other denominations have contributed largely towards the diffusion of Christian knowledge, by means of their missionary labours; but the Methodists were the instruments in the hands of God, of giving the first spring to this great and glorious work. This has been so manifest to the attentive observer, that some have had the frankness to acknowledge it. Let the reader, for information on this subject, consult *Hawes' Ecclesiastical History*, *Buck's Theological Dictionary*, under the article *Methodist*, and *Coke's Life of Wesley*. And what but the same philanthropic spirit which actuated the primitive preachers of christianity, could have actuated the Methodist ministry? All who are acquainted with our temporal economy well know, that it could not be the expectation of pecuniary reward; and those who are acquainted with the labours and sufferings of our ministry, will not accuse us of seeking ease and self-indulgence. Many have suffered cold and nakedness, some stripes and imprisonments, and all in their turn the slanders of the malignant, the false accusations of the fiery bigot, and the sneers of that world who know not God. But in the midst of this contumely and reproach, slander and misrepresentation, the salutary effects of our ministrations have extorted from others an unwilling confession in our favour. Did we refuse to preach, until the people had stipulated to give us three, five, ten, or

twenty hundred dollars annually, there might be some cause to suspect we were actuated by sinister motives, and that our ministry was founded in "selfishness." Did we flatter the great, frown upon the small, and practise a courtly intrigue towards the world to obtain its smiles—Did we disguise our real sentiments before a public audience, until compelled to "come out," and own them, that we might avoid an open and fair investigation of our principles, we might be supposed to have some open or secret collusion with the grand deceiver. But no,—we go out into the *highways and hedges*, spending our days and nights, our health and strength, and some expending large fortunes to carry the glad tidings of salvation to a lost world.—And by the grace of God we are willing to spend and be spent in so glorious a cause, "not counting our lives dear to ourselves, if we may but win Christ, and be found in him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is by faith in him." And through the abundant grace of God in Christ Jesus, there are many who can say, that we have been unto them a sweet *savour of life*, who, we humbly hope, will be our crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus.

13. These things are not said by way of boasting, to extol the creature. We know that "God hath put this treasure into earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of men;" therefore "let him that glorieth, glory in the Lord." If it hath pleased God at any time to

give success to our ministry, the glory and honour is due to him, and him alone. But when our characters and conduct is assailed, and the purity of our motives, (which are known only to God and ourselves) are called in question, we may be allowed to speak a word in our own defence, without being accused of vanity and self-commendation. While a Methodist minister is facing the storms, enduring reproach for Christ's sake, and riding from place to place to preach the everlasting gospel to a perishing world, it is an easy matter for a *parish priest*, snugly situated in the midst of surrounding plenty, to enter his pulpit on a Sabbath day, and entertain his audience with a cool, systematic discourse on the danger of the eternally elected being deceived by these ministers of Satan. It is doubted whether the great Head of the Church will approbate you, sir, by saying, *Well done, good and faithful servant*, for having said so much in favour of sin, and for attempting to prove that the holy "God has decreed all the sins in the universe."

14. How much more consonant to scripture and reason to unfold the wonderful design of God to fallen man, in the rich displays of his grace in Christ Jesus, who tasted death for every man. To warn sinners of their approaching danger, if they continue obstinate in their sins—to invite them to return unto God with humble and penitent hearts, that they may be received to his favour—to exhibit to them the plenitude of divine grace, by which they may be delivered from all their sins, become holy in

heart and life, and thus be prepared for everlasting glory. These truths are calculated to expand the mind with comprehensive views of the divine goodness and wisdom; and to excite gratitude and confidence—gratitude for the rich provisions of redemption, and confidence in the ample promises of pardon and sanctification.

With these views of the gospel of our salvation, and with sentiments of love for you, dear sir, and for all men, I take my leave of controversy for the present. To God we are all responsible for our sentiments and practice—*He is love*. May we therefore provoke one another to love and good works. If indeed controversy should stir up *hatred* and *ill-will*, instead of *love* and *good-will*, we should be infinite losers by our labour. It is possible, however, to *speak the truth in love*. God grant that *love* may actuate our hearts and dwell upon our tongues.

Yours, affectionately,

N. BANGS.

REV. S. WILLISTON, *Durham, N. Y.*

New-York June 1, 1815.



APPENDIX.

IT is said in the preface to the preceding work, That predestination respects the means of salvation, and the foundation of our hope, which is Christ Jesus. This proposition demands proof. By the *means of salvation*, is understood, not merely the outward ordinances of the Church, which are standing memorials of Christ's love to man, and incontestible evidences of the truth of Christianity; but *repentance, faith and holiness*, without which it is impossible to be saved. That it is according to the unalterable appointment, or the immutable predestination of God, that none shall be saved without believing in Christ, (I mean those who live under the light of the gospel, and those who have arrived to an adult age) and *without holiness*, is abundantly manifest from holy scripture. *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. He that believeth not shall be damned. Repent, and believe the gospel. Without faith, it is impossible to please him. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Be ye holy, for I am holy. This is the will of God, even your sanctification.* These texts fully express the unalterable determination of God respecting the means, or condition of salvation, and the necessary qualifications for heaven: and from this determination no

one need expect he will ever recede. Sinners may vainly attempt to fortify themselves against the arrows of truth, and hope to escape the vengeance of God. If they refuse to repent, and believe in Jesus Christ, they can have no scriptural hope of eternal life. God has revealed the terms of acceptance; and with these all must comply, or never enter the kingdom of heaven.

That predestination also respects the foundation of our hope, which is Christ Jesus, is equally manifest. *This is the stone which was set at nought by you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,* Acts iv. 11, 12. In these words the Apostle Peter gave the cavelling Jews to understand, that if they rejected Jesus of Nazareth, as the Messiah, they could have no hope of salvation; for there was no other name given whereby we must be saved. To him they must submit, and in him they must believe, because he was, by the wise and benevolent appointment of God, the immoveable stone on which the Church must be built. The same truth is declared by the Apostle Paul, *For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*—1 Cor. iii. 11. So also it is said, “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,” Eph. i. 5. Here the same foundation is alluded to as in the former text,—*Christ Jesus;*

and the *predestination* of God in regard to their adoption by *Christ Jesus*, plainly shews that the Apostle meant to establish the *general principle*, agreeably to which souls should be saved; and all this according to the *good pleasure of his will*.

The Jews hoped for salvation by the law of Moses, by outward ceremonies, by external purifications, &c. and the gentiles hoped for salvation by their philosophy, their altars, temples, and gods: the one looked upon Christ as preached by the Apostles, as *a stone of stumbling and rock of offence*; the other considered *the preaching of the cross as foolishness*: to both the Apostles declare, that their hopes were vain, their foundation was in the sand; and therefore they must relinquish all dependence, each in their favourite peculiarities; and submit to the only sure foundation, which God, according to his wise determination before the foundation of the world, had laid. This truth, respecting the medium of reconciliation to God, was as a two-edged sword, equally cutting asunder the delusive hopes of Jews and Gentiles.

How sublime, and how glorious does the predestination of God appear, when viewed in this point of light! No lowering clouds of eternal wrath against reprobated millions, appear to darken the sky of Gospel truth. No *narrow rivulet* of electing love runs through the plain of human misery, merely to quench the thirst of a *few* favoured souls. But the luminous rays of divine light from the *Sun of righteousness*, are widely diffused throughout the

horizon of the moral world ; and the *broad river* of redeeming love, widening as it majestically flows along, is sufficiently capacious to satisfy the “raging thirst” of all the perishing sons of fallen man. How delightful to behold a smiling God in the face of Jesus Christ, with arms of benevolence extended to all the human race, ready to infold them with paternal love ! No thundering voice of vengeance, of *eternal vengeance*, is heard to echo from the elevated mount of redeeming love, to those objects of *eternal hatred*, whom the Hopkinsians suppose God had consigned to eternal darkness, before “old chaos and ancient night” existed. If this alarming voice is ever heard, it will be heard from a throne of inflexible justice, rendered more resplendent, by the reflecting rays of uncreated goodness, (though somewhat veiled by the abuses it has received by the obstinate sinner) roaring through the ears of all heaven, who will approbate the righteous sentence, by a loud *Amen* to the sentence of condemnation. No arbitrary act this. But an act required by the immutable law of justice, from whose righteous penalty goodness itself could not persuade the hardened sinner to exempt himself in the day of his merciful visitation. My heart trembles while thinking and writing upon this awful subject. May God of his infinite mercy, save the sinner from experiencing the just sentence of eternal condemnation.

But, methinks I see the rigid predestinarian, with marks of dissatisfaction on his countenance, advancing with his bible under his arm. To that sacred

book I would bow with all due respect : to its dictates my soul would submit, as to an oracle divine. He turns over its leaves, and thus renews his objections. “ Sir, you have said, that the doctrine of election and reprobation, so often introduced to the readers’ notice in this blessed book, relates to nations and communities, and not to individuals. To convince you of your mistake, I produce you the case of *Pharaoh*, which the Apostle Paul mentions with peculiar emphasis, in the ninth chapter of his epistle to the Romans. This instance certainly affords a striking proof of *personal reprobation* ; and I thence conclude, that if one individual may have been selected as an object of eternal reprobation, why not millions ?”

Truly—If indeed it can be proved that *Pharaoh* was eternally reprobated to everlasting misery, without any respect to his works foreseen, it would be no contemptible proof in favour of your doctrine. But it is presumed, *that* is a point taken for granted without sufficient proof.

To be convinced whether this be so or not, let us impartially examine those passages which have given birth to that opinion. “ *Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up*, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.” And do you conclude that *this same purpose* for which *Pharaoh* was *raised up*, was, that he might be eternally destroyed ?

Does not this conclusion originate from inattention to the subject ? The Apostle, so far from af-

firming that God's purpose concerning the Egyptian king, was to destroy him for ever, explicitly declares that his design was, that his *power might be shewn*, and that his *name might be declared throughout all the earth*. How noble, how grand, this design of God! Such was the moral state of the world at *that time*, as to require some extraordinary interposition of Divine Providence to arouse them from the profound stupor in which they were, respecting spiritual and divine things. The Egyptians, and all the surrounding nations, sunk in the profoundest ignorance respecting the character of God, enslaved to the most shameful sensualities, subjected to obscene rites and ceremonies in their religious services, worshipping idols which could neither hear nor speak, needed some illustrious manifestation of the being and attributes of the true God, to convince them of the nullity of their imaginary deities, the dangerous tendency of their immoral practices, and the futility of their contemptible modes of worship. The *Israelites* too, having been long in bondage to the *Egyptians*, and no doubt assimilating more or less to their moral conduct, faith, and modes of worship, were not in a condition to be convinced of their error, by argumentation addressed to their understandings; but they also needed some awful signals of the majesty and power of the true God, to open their eyes, and break their fond attachment to Egyptian customs, ceremonies, &c. Now to remove this veil which was upon all flesh, some signal display of the power and goodness of the *only true*

and living God, became necessary. For *this purpose* Pharaoh was raised up from the death which would have followed the *plagues* which were sent upon him and upon his people. That he might *endure them all* in succession, he had extraordinary strength given him. Therefore it is said, *I will harden his heart*.

“ The case of Pharaoh has given rise to many fierce controversies, and to several strange and conflicting opinions. Would men but look at the whole account without the medium of their respective creeds, they would find little difficulty to apprehend the truth. If we take up the subject in a *theological* point of view, all sober christians will allow the truth of this proposition of St. Augustin, when the subject in question is a person who has hardened his own heart, by frequently resisting the grace and Spirit of God. ‘ God does not harden men by infusing malice into them, but by not imparting mercy to them.’ And this other will be as readily credited. ‘ God does not work this hardness of heart in man, but he may be said to harden him whom he refuses to soften, to blind him whom he refuses to enlighten, and to repel him whom he refuses to call.’ It is but just and right that he should withhold those graces which he had repeatedly offered, and which the sinner had despised and rejected. Thus much for the general principle.— The verb *pin chazak*, which we translate *harden*, literally signifies to *strengthen, confirm, make bold or courageous*: and is often used in the Sacred Writings, to *excite to duty, perseverance, &c.* and is

placed by the Jews at the end of most books in the Bible, as an exhortation to the reader to *take courage*, and *proceed* with his *reading*, and with the obedience it requires. It constitutes an essential part of the exhortation of God to Joshua, ch. i. 7. *Only be thou strong*, רַק חַזַק *rak chazak*. And of Joshua's dying exhortation to the people, ch. xxiii. 6. *be ye therefore very courageous*, וְחַזַקְתֶּם *ve-chazaktem*, *to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law*. Now it would be very strange in these places to translate the word *harden*—*Only be thou hard*—Be ye therefore very HARD. And yet if we use the word *hardy*, it would suit the sense and context perfectly well: *only be thou HARDY*—*Be ye therefore very HARDY*. Now suppose we apply the word in this way to Pharaoh, the sense would be good, and the justice of God equally conspicuous. I will make his heart hardy, bold, daring, presumptuous,—for the same principle acting *against* God's order, is *presumption*; which, when acting according to it, is *undaunted courage*. It is true that the verb קָשָׁה *kashah* is used, chap. vii. 3. which signifies to render stiff, tough, or stubborn, but it amounts to nearly the same meaning with the above.

•• All those who have read the scriptures with care and attention, well know that God is frequently represented in them as *doing* what he only *permits* to be done. So because a man has grieved his Spirit, and resisted his grace, he withdraws that Spirit and grace from him, and thus he becomes bold and presumptuous in sin. Pharaoh made his own heart stubborn against God, chap. ix. 34. and God gave

him up to judicial blindness, so that he rushed on stubbornly to his own destruction. From the whole of Pharaoh's conduct we learn, that he was *bold, haughty, and cruel*: and God chose to permit these dispositions to have their full sway in his heart, without check or restraint from divine influence; the consequence was what God intended, he did not *immediately* comply with the requisition to let the people go: and this was done that God might have the fuller opportunity of manifesting his power by multiplying signs and miracles; and thus impress the hearts both of the Egyptians and Israelites, with a due sense of his omnipotence and justice. The whole procedure was calculated to do endless good to both nations. The Israelites must be satisfied that they had the true God for their protector; and thus their *faith* was strengthened.—The Egyptians must see that their gods could do nothing against the God of *Israel*, and thus their dependence on *them* was necessarily shaken. These great ends could not have been answered, had Pharaoh at once consented to let the people go. This consideration alone unravels the mystery, and explains every thing. Let it be observed, that there is nothing spoken here of the *eternal state* of the Egyptian king; nor does any thing in the whole of the subsequent account authorize us to believe that God *hardened his heart against the influences of his own grace*, that he might occasion him so to sin, that his justice might consign him to hell. This would be such an act of flagrant injustice, as we could scarce-

ly attribute to the worst of men. He who leads another into an offence, that he may have a fairer pretence to punish him for it; or brings him into such circumstances, that he cannot avoid committing a capital crime, and then hangs him for it, is surely the most execrable of mortals.—What then should we make of the God of Justice and mercy, should we attribute to him a decree, the date of which is lost in eternity, by which he has determined to cut off from the possibility of salvation, millions of millions of unborn souls, and leave them under a necessity of sinning, by actually hardening their hearts against the influences of his own grace and spirit, that he may, on the pretext of justice, consign them to endless perdition? Whatever may be pretended in behalf of such *unqualified* opinions, it must be evident to all who are not deeply prejudiced, that neither the *justice* nor the *sovereignty* of God can be magnified by them.” Dr. A. Clarke on Exodus iv. 21.

It appears therefore, to have been the design of God, in his awful transactions with Pharaoh and the Israelites, to convince them of his uncontrollable authority over the physical and moral world, and thereby to revive the knowledge of his own most glorious character among mankind. This grand design justified the extraordinary means which were employed. And the *designed effect*, it would appear, was produced; for when the tidings of these miraculous events were heard, the people, the Egyptians, and even the *Canaanites* greatly feared;

and their hearts melted within them. “I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your *terror is fallen upon us*, and that all the inhabitants of the land *faint because of you*. For we have heard how the *Lord dried up the water of the red sea for you* when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man because of you: for THE LORD YOUR GOD, HE IS GOD IN HEAVEN ABOVE, AND IN EARTH BENEATH.” Josh. ii. 9—11. Indeed all the surrounding nations were struck with solemn awe, when they heard what the *God of the Israelites* had done in *Egypt*, at the *Red sea*, at *Sinai*, and in the *wilderness*.

How much more worthy of God were these noble and benevolent *ends*, than to suppose Pharaoh was raised up from infancy to manhood, and then to the throne of Egypt; and that God positively hardened his heart in wickedness, merely to send him to hell. No such unworthy conclusion is warranted from the words of the Apostle, nor from the narration of facts respecting the dealings of God with Pharaoh and the Israelites.

“Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth,” Rom. ix. 18. And is it concluded from these words that God in an arbitrary manner, raises some to everlasting life, and hardeneth others to everlasting death? “So it would seem,”—but without sufficient

authority. Leaving the consideration out of the question, that the Apostle was speaking in a *national*, not *individual* point of view, we may have a consistent interpretation of these words, which involves no idea of *unconditional predestination*.

The simple question is, *On whom will he have mercy?* Isaiah shall answer—*Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and HE WILL HAVE MERCY upon him*, chap. lv. 7. 'Those therefore, on whom the Lord *will have mercy*, are such of the wicked as forsake *their way*, and *return* unto the Lord. But who does the Lord *will to harden*?—Who indeed but such obstinate sinners as *refuse* to hearken to his voice, and return unto him with penitent hearts—those who, like Pharaoh, first harden *themselves*, agreeably to the declaration of Solomon, "A wicked man *hardeneth* his face." Prov. xxii. 29. "He that, being often reprov'd, *hardeneth his neck*, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy," ch. xxix. 1. Such sinners as wilfully resist the operations of divine grace, *shall eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices*, ch. i. 31.

From this view of the subject, we may perceive that the Apostle Paul, in the words under consideration, asserts the *predestination* for which we contend: it being according to God's unalterable counsel, to have mercy upon all who forsake their sins, return unto him, and believe in Jesus Christ: and to harden, by withholding the influences of his Spi-

rit, all those who first harden themselves in iniquity until their day of grace ends ; and finally to punish them with *everlasting destruction from the presence of God, and the glory of his power.*

“Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour ?” ver. 21. Unquestionably.— But who ever heard of a *Potter*, that made a vessel expressly to dash it to pieces ! Such conduct in a man would indicate great folly, or great anger, or both.

And is it lawful to infer from these words, that God has made one part of the human family for no other purpose than to torment them in hell for ever ? The obvious meaning of the Apostle is, that as the *Potter* makes some *vessels* for more *honourable* uses than he does others, so God has raised some nations, the *Jews*, for instance, formerly, and now the *Gentiles*, who are called to the exalted privileges of Christianity, to higher dignity, and for more honourable purposes, than he has others.— The *Jews*, who were called to be God’s peculiar people, in distinction from other nations, were, in consequence of their national and church privileges, more honourable than their neighbours. These favours were not granted them because they were better by nature than others, but were bestowed according to the sovereign pleasure of God ; who demanded an improvement proportionate to the favours thus granted them. Now, the *Gentiles*, who are called to the exalted blessings of Christianity,

are more highly honoured than the *Jews*, *Moham-idans*, or *Pagans* ; for the use of which blessings they are responsible to God. But it does not follow from hence, that all those who live under the light of the Gospel, are elected to everlasting life, nor that all others are reprobated to eternal burnings. There were doubtless many among the Jews formerly, who were included among God's chosen people upon earth, that reprobated themselves, by abusing the mercies they enjoyed : and no doubt also, but many of the Gentiles, who wisely improved the day of their merciful visitation, were *graciously saved* with life everlasting, See Rom. ii. 13—15.—And so also there may be many who are now exalted to the invaluable blessings of the Gospel church, will finally reprobate themselves by their disobedience. Moreover, it would appear, that even some of these vessels of *dishonour* may become vessels of *honour*. “ But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth, and some to *honour*, and some to *dishonour*. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he *shall be* a vessel unto *honour*, *sanctified*, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work,” 2 Tim. ii. 20, 21. From this text, it is manifest that those who are comparatively *dishonourable*, may, by purging themselves from sinful passions, become vessels of honour, and shine, like gold and silver, in the Church of God.

“What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endureth with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction,” ver. 22. On reading these words, those who have been educated in the school of unconditional predestination, conclude that these *vessels of wrath* are *fitted to destruction*, under the influence of an eternal decree of reprobation : hence the *long-suffering* of which the Apostle speaks, is entirely overlooked. But, *who are thus fitted to destruction* ? Paul, speaking of the wicked who seek not after God, *whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness*, adds, “*Destruction and misery are in their ways : and the way of peace have they not known*,” Rom. iii. 16, 17. “Is not *destruction* to the *wicked*, and a strange punishment to the *workers of iniquity* ?” Job. xxxi. 3. “*Pride goeth before destruction*, and an haughty spirit before a *fall*.” Prov. xvi. 18. We see therefore how sinners are fitted to *destruction* ; not indeed by an act of God ; but for refusing to seek after God, for not knowing the way of peace, when they might have known it, for being wicked, and for indulging in pride ; and an haughty contempt of the *long-suffering* of God.

This *long-suffering*, which was exercised towards these characters, who are thus *self-fitted to destruction*, is designed to lead them to *repentance* and *salvation*. “Or despisest thou the riches of his *goodness* and *forbearance*, and *long-suffering* ; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to *repentance*,” Rom. ii. 4. “And account that the *long-*

suffering of the Lord is *salvation*; even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you," 2 Pet. iii. 15. So that, even these *vessels of wrath*, upon whom God will finally *shew his wrath*, and *make his power known*, were once objects of his long-suffering, and consequently within the possibility of salvation.

"Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed," Isaiah vi. 9, 10. From these words it is concluded by some, that the design of the Prophet's mission to the Jews was, absolutely to make them the more hard in iniquity, thereby to prevent their *conversion*. But in the language of the Hebrews, the agent is frequently said *to do* things, which he only predicts *will be done*, or simply *declares* is already done. So the Lord says to Jeremiah, "See, I have this day set thee over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build and to plant," ch. i. 10. Now it is certain that Jeremiah was not sent in his own person, to *overturn nations* and *kingdoms*, to *root out*, *pull down*, and *destroy cities* and *villages*, to *build* houses, and *plant* vineyards: but he was sent to *declare*, or *predict* that these judgments would come upon those communities, for their

wickedness against God. So also the Apostle Paul saith, *the saints shall judge the world*—that is, they shall *declare* the just judgments of God against a wicked world. This key will open the meaning of the above words of Isaiah. God sent him to *declare* unto the *iniquitous Jews*, that their hearts *were fat*, that their ears *were heavy*, and that their eyes *were shut*; and that, consequently, they *would* not see with their eyes, hear with their ears, nor understand with their hearts; and therefore, so long as this was the case, they *could not* be converted and healed. Is not this a plain, scriptural, and rational solution of the difficulty which appears upon the face of the text?

“ But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption,” 2 Pet. ii. 12. From hence it is inferred, that those sinners of which the Apostle speaks, were made expressly to be *taken* by sin and Satan, and then eternally *destroyed*. But is it not the *natural brute beasts*, which the Apostle says were *made to be taken and destroyed*? and that those wicked men, who, like the Sodomites, resembled *brute beasts*, by walking *after the flesh*, in the lust of *uncleanness*, and despise government, should finally receive the reward of *unrighteousness*, as they *that count it pleasure to riot in the day time*. In what a contemptible point of light does the opposite opinion represent the Almighty, by saying that he brings some sinners into existence, in order to lead them

into the *snares of sin*, that they might be fattened for the day of slaughter, and finally devoured like *natural brute beasts*! Surely this could not be the meaning of the holy Apostle. Besides, it would appear that the persons spoken of, were *apostates*. “Having *forsaken the right way*, and are gone *astray*, following the way of Balaam, the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness,” verse 15. Were reprobates ever in the *right way*?

“For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation,” Jude verse 4. If a correct translation of this passage had been given, it never could have been produced to support unconditional predestination. Παλαι προγεγραμμένοι, (*Palai progegrammenoi*) the words here rendered *before of old ordained*, literally signify, *of old, before written*: for προγεγραμμένοι, comes from προ, *before*, and γεγραφα, *to write*, or γράμμα, “a letter, or character of literal writing.”* It was not the *persons*, which were identified in the time of Jude to the condemnation *before written*; but their *character*. It being the immutable determination of God to punish *all ungodly characters*, in every age of the world, he ordered this determination to be recorded, or written, *of old*, long *before* the days of Jude; and to this revealed and written determination of God, St. Jude appeals, to shew that his declarations concerning the punishment of such *ungodly characters*, were predicated of *truth*, the immutable *truth of God*.

* Parkhurst.

We often err in the interpretation of authors, by not attending to the *time, place, and circumstances* of their writing. These things ought especially to be kept in mind when we read the sacred scriptures. When the Apostles were sent out to preach the glad tidings of salvation through Jesus Christ, they proposed a system of religion, to which the Gentiles especially, and the Jews also, in a great measure, were strangers. In propagating their doctrine, they used *terms* which were found in the *Greek* language, and which were well understood by the Greeks themselves, to convey certain appropriate ideas, respecting *their system of theology*; but which, when incorporated by the Apostles into the Christian phraseology, were used in a different sense. It cannot be supposed they used the words Θεός, (*Theos*) *God*, Πίστις, (*Pistis*) *Faith*, Σοφία, (*Sophia*) *Wisdom*, Ἅγιος, (*Agios*) *Holy*, in the same sense in which the Heathen philosophers did: but they attached a higher, and more dignified meaning to them. It is well known that most of the Heathen philosophers believed and taught the doctrine of *fate*, especially those who professed to believe in the eternity of matter, &c. Hence the terms which they used in their *theology* to signify that fatality which was supposed to preside over the affairs of men, were adopted and used by the Apostles; but unquestionably they used them in a different sense from what the Heathen philosophers used them.—Thus the word ὀρίζω, (*oriso*) which signifies to *bound, limit, decree, set, or appoint*, and was used by the

profane writers according to its literal import, when they applied it to the *fates* of men, of communities, and individuals, was not used by the New-Testament writers to signify that *all the actions* of every individual, were *decreed, bounded, and limited* by an irrevocable decree of God, respecting those actions; but when it was used to designate the decree, or appointment of the Almighty, it related, as I have before observed, to his immutable designs, in regard to the method of salvation by Jesus Christ, and the qualifications for heaven.

From not attending to these obvious truths, some Christian writers have unwarrantably degraded the sublime doctrines of the Gospel of the Son of God, levelling them to the contemptible subtleties of heathen philosophy; thereby imperceptibly corrupting the minds of christians from that pure and simple form of doctrine, which was first *delivered to the saints*, by Christ and his Apostles. By this means also, man is reduced to the level of a brute or a stone, in regard to praise or blame—being divested of that distinguishing and noble endowment, *power to will and to act*, he is reduced to the fatal necessity of being *acted upon* by an irresistible influence, in order *to act*; and of being compelled in all he does, in all cases and circumstances. By the same injudicious method, God, the author of all good, is represented in the character of a *cruel despot*, who has *ordained* one line of conduct for his intelligent creatures, but *commanded* another; and

who punishes with everlasting destruction a part of his creatures, who exactly fulfil the counsel of his will! Such unbecoming views of the divine character and government, must have originated from a misunderstanding of his gracious designs, and a misapplication of the terms used by the inspired writers.

Laying aside such unworthy thoughts of God, and viewing him in the light of scripture and enlightened reason, which unfold him as a being of untarnished rectitude, of boundless wisdom and benevolence, of infinite justice and goodness, whose governing influence is exercised over a world of free, responsible intelligencies; and whose righteous laws, founded in the immutable nature and fitness of things, are in perfect correspondence to his decrees, both revealed for the regulation of man's conduct. From this scriptural and rational view of things, we see a broad basis, an immoveable rock, on which we may stand, and beseech sinners to be *reconciled to God*. Some, however, may object, that the conflicting opinions of the different sects of professing Christians, presents an impassable barrier in their way. But why should these things stagger your faith in the reality of Christianity, any more than the different opinions prevalent among philosophers and astronomers, should excite doubts respecting the truth and reality of those sciences? It is not the province of any one man to know *all* the truth relating to any one science: and therefore men may very innocently differ respecting some

points, without any diminution of brotherly affection, or without undermining the main pillar of truth. We all agree, That there is a God, that Jesus Christ died for sinners, and that mankind are fallen beings; and that consequently men must be born again in order to enter into the kingdom of God. These truths are clearly revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and unequivocally taught by the greater part of those denominations who profess to be Christians. So far then, all is plain and easy.—Improve according to the light and opportunities you have, and what is now dark and mysterious, will become light and perspicuous. To obtain victory in argument, to silence an antagonist in debate is a matter of minor importance to the obtaining victory over sin, and triumphing over the corruptions of our own hearts. Against these internal foes, we ought therefore to bend ourselves with all our might; knowing that we shall be vanquished, unless aided by Jesus Christ, *the author and finisher of our faith.*

Let us then, for a moment, lay aside the weapons of controversy, with which we have been combating errors of doctrine, and enter into a close investigation of our own hearts. Our shouts of victory are unseasonable, unless they are accompanied with humility, faith, love to God, to our fellow men who may differ from us in some sentimental points, as well as those of our own party—and with a victory over our own hearts. Have we ever been convinced of sin, so as to see its heinous nature? Has

this produced a godly sorrow, and a renunciation of those evils which rendered repentance necessary? Have we been led by faith to Jesus Christ, as our only refuge in the day of trouble? Do we now feel that we have peace with God; and are pressing forward after higher attainments of Christian knowledge, and experience? Can we demonstrate to the world the truth and reality of our religion, by our sober, faithful, holy, and upright lives, by an honest attention to all our lawful avocations? Does the purity and excellence of religion thus shine forth in our daily walk and conversation?

It is good to have our judgments accurately informed respecting divine truth; but unless this truth influence our hearts, we shall be none the better for it at last. "With the *heart* man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." If this publication should so stir up the flame of controversy, as to extinguish love to God and man, I should repent of my labour, and miss the main object of writing. Let us hold fast the *form of sound words*, earnestly contend for the pure system of truth; but let us do it with *meekness and respect*, confirming our love, even towards those who may differ from us in some speculative points, which are deemed of importance. But that which is the most important, is a full deliverance from sin, and a perfect conformity to the divine image of *righteousness and true holiness*. *May we so speak and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.* Amen.



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